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THE

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OF

LAURENCE STERNE.

IN TEN VOLUMES COMPLETE.

CONTAINING,

I. THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TRISTRAM SHANDY, GENT.

II. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY.

III. SERMONS. —— IV. LETTERS.

WITH

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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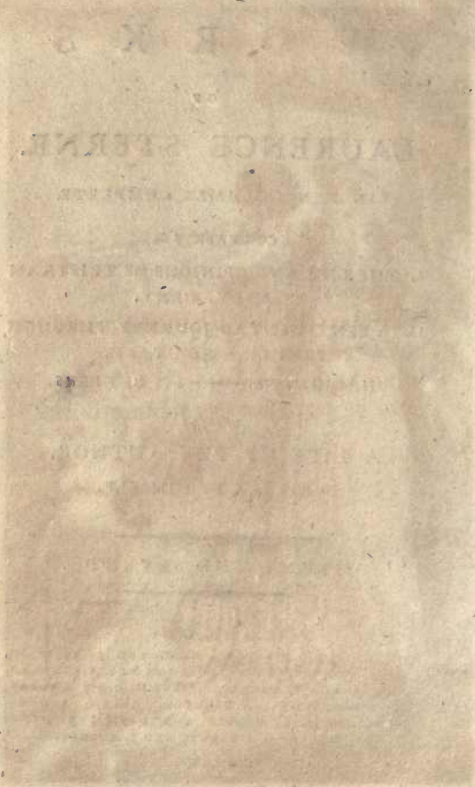

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SERMONS

BY

LAURENCE STERNE, A.M.

PREBENDARY OF YORK,
AND VICAR OF SUTTON ON THE FOREST,
AND OF STILLINGTON NEAR YORK.

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Job's Expoſtulation with his Wife.

JOB, II. 10.

What!——Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo?

THESE are the words of Job, uttered in the depth of his misfortunes, by way of reproof to his wife, for the counſel we find ſhe had given him in the foregoing verſe; namely, not to retain his integrity any longer,——but to *curſe God and die.* Though it is not very evident, what was particularly meant and implied in the words——"Curſe God and die,"——yet it is certain from Job's reply to them, that they directed him to ſome ſtep, which was raſh and unwarrantable, and probably, as it is generally explained, meant that he ſhould openly call GOD's juſtice to an account, and by a blaſphemous accuſation of it, provoke GOD to

deſtroy his being: as if ſhe had ſaid,—After ſo many ſad things which have befallen thee, notwithſtanding thy integrity, what gaineſt thou by ſerving GOD, ſeeing he bears thus hard upon thee, as though thou waſt his enemy?——Ought ſo faithful a ſervant as thou haſt been, to receive ſo much unkind treatment at his hands;—and tamely to ſubmit to it;—patiently to ſuſtain the evils he has brought upon thy houſe, and neither murmur with thy lips nor charge him with injuſtice?—Bear it not thus;—and as thy piety could not at firſt protect thee from ſuch misfortunes,—nor thy behaviour under them could ſince move GOD to take pity on thee;—change thy conduct towards him;—boldly expoſtulate with him;—upbraid him openly with unkindneſs;—call his juſtice and providence to an account for oppreſſing thee in ſo undeſerved a manner, and get that benefit by provoking him, which thou haſt not been able to obtain by ſerving him—to die at once by his hands, and be freed at leaſt, from the greater miſery of a lingering and more tormenting death.

On the other hand, ſome interpreters tell us,——that the word *curſe*, in the original, is equivocal, and does more literally ſignify here, to bleſs than to blaſpheme, and conſequently that the whole is rather to be conſidered as a ſarcaſtical ſcoff at Job's piety.—As if it had been ſaid;—Go to,—bleſs GOD,—and die;—ſince thou art ſo ready to praiſe him in troubles as thou haſt done, go on in thy own way, and ſee how GOD will reward thee, by a miſerable death which thou canſt not avoid.

Without diſputing the merit of theſe two interpretations, it may not ſeem an improbable conjecture, that the words imply ſomething ſtill different from what is expreſſed in either of them,——and inſtead of ſuppoſing them as an incitement to blaſpheme GOD,—which was madneſs—or that they were intended as an inſult, which was unnatural;—that her advice to curſe GOD and die, was meant here, that he ſhould reſolve upon a voluntary death himſelf, which was an act not only in his own power, but what carried ſome ap-

pearance of a remedy with it, and promiſed, at leaſt at firſt ſight, ſome reſpite from pain, as it would put an end both to his life and his misfortunes together.

One may ſuppoſe that with all the concern and affection which was natural, ſhe beheld her lord afflicted both with poverty and ſickneſs; — by one ſudden blow brought down from his palace to the dunghill.—In one mournful day ſhe ſaw that not only the fortunes of his houſe were blaſted, but likewiſe the hopes of his poſterity cut off for ever by the untimely loſs of his children.—She knew he was a virtuous and an upright man, and deſerved a better fate;—her heart bled the more for him,—ſhe ſaw the proſpect before him was dreadful,——that there appeared no poſſible means, which could retrieve the ſad ſituation of his affairs,—that death, the laſt—the ſureſt friend to the unfortunate, could only ſet him free;—and that it was better to reſolve upon that at once, than vainly endeavour to wade through ſuch a ſea of troubles, which in the end would overwhelm him.

We may ſuppoſe her ſpirits ſinking under thoſe apprehenſions, when ſhe began to look upon his conſtancy as a fruitleſs virtue, and from that perſuaſion, to have ſaid unto him,—Curſe God,—depend no longer upon him, nor wait the iſſues of his providence which has already forſaken thee:——as there is no help from that quarter, reſolve to extricate thyſelf;—and ſince thou haſt met with no juſtice in this world,—leave it,—die,——and force thy paſſage into a better country, where misfortunes cannot follow thee.

Whether this paraphraſe upon the words is juſt, or the former interpretations be admitted,——the reply in the text is equally proper;—What!—Shall we receive good at the hands of GOD, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo? Are not both alike the diſpenſations of an all-wiſe and good Being, who knows and determines what *is beſt?* and wherefore ſhould I make myſelf the judge, to receive the one, and yet be ſo partial as to reject the other, when by fairly putting both into the ſcale, I may be convinced how much the good

outweighs the evil in all caſes? in my own, conſider how ſtrong this argument is againſt me.

In the beginning of my days, how did GOD crown me with honour! In how remarkable a manner did his providence ſet a hedge about me, and about all that I had on every ſide!—how he proſpered the works of my hands, ſo that our ſubſtance and happineſs increaſed every day!

And now, when for reaſons beſt known to his infinite wiſdom, he has thought fit to try me with afflictions,——ſhall I rebel againſt him in ſinning with my lips, and charging him fooliſhly?—GOD forbid!—O rather may I look up towards that hand which has bruiſed me,—for he maketh ſore and he bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole. From his bounty only has iſſued all I had, from his wiſdom—all I have loſt; for he giveth and he hath taken away: bleſſed be his name!

There are few inſtances of particular virtue more engaging than thoſe of this heroic caſt; and if we may take the teſ-

timony of a heathen philoſopher upon it, there is not an object in this world which GOD can be ſuppoſed to look down upon with greater pleaſure, than that of a good man involved in misfortunes, ſurrounded on all ſides with difficulties—yet cheerfully bearing up his head, and ſtruggling againſt them with firmneſs and conſtancy of mind.—Certainly to our conceptions ſuch objects muſt be truly engaging:—and the reaſon of ſo exalted an encomium from this hand, is eaſily to be gueſſed: no doubt the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers had found, from obſervation upon the life of man, that the many troubles and infirmities of his nature, the ſickneſſes, diſappointments, ſorrows for the loſs of children or property, with the numberleſs other calamities and croſs accidents to which the life of man is ſubject, were in themſelves ſo *great;*—and ſo *little* ſolid comfort to be adminiſtered from the mere refinements of philoſophy in ſuch emergencies, that there was no virtue which required greater efforts, or which was found ſo difficult to be atchieved

upon moral principles; upon moral principles—which had no foundation to ſuſtain this great weight, which the infirmities of our nature laid upon it. And for this reaſon 'tis obſervable that there is no ſubject, upon which the moral writers of antiquity have exhauſted ſo much of their eloquence, or where they have ſpent ſuch time and pains, as in this of endeavouring to reconcile men to theſe evils. Inſomuch, that from thence, in moſt modern languages, the patient enduring of affliction has by degrees obtained the name of Philoſopher, and almoſt monopolized the word to itſelf, as if it was the chief end or compendium of all the wiſdom which philoſophy had to offer. And indeed, conſidering what lights they had, ſome of them wrote extremely well; yet, as what they ſaid proceeded more from the head than the heart, 'twas generally more calculated to ſilence a man in his troubles, than to convince, and teach him how to bear them. And therefore however ſubtle and ingenious their arguments might appear in the reading, 'tis to be

feared they loſt much of their efficacy when tried in the application. If a man was thruſt back in the world by diſappointments, or—as was Job's caſe—had ſuffered a ſudden change in his fortunes, from an affluent condition was brought down by a train of cruel accidents, and pinched with poverty—philoſophy would come in, and exhort him to ſtand his ground;——it would tell him that the ſame greatneſs and ſtrength of mind, which enabled him to behave well in the days of his proſperity, ſhould equally enable him to behave well in the days of his adverſity;—that it was the property of only weak and baſe ſpirits, who were inſolent in the one, to be dejected and overthrown by the other; whereas great and generous ſouls were at all times calm and equal. As they enjoyed the advantages of life with indifference,—they were able to reſign them with the ſame temper,—and conſequently,—were out of the reach of fortune. All which, however fine, and likely to ſatisfy the fancy of a man at eaſe, could convey but little con-

ſolation to a heart already pierced with ſorrow;—nor is it to be conceived how an unfortunate creature ſhould any more receive relief from ſuch a lecture, however juſt, than a man racked with an acute fit of the gout or ſtone could be ſuppoſed to be ſet free from torture, by hearing from his phyſician a nice diſſertation upon his caſe. The philoſophic conſolations in ſickneſs, or in afflictions for the death of friends and kindred, were juſt as efficacious;—and were rather in general to be conſidered as good ſayings than good remedies.——So that, if a man was bereaved of a promiſed child, in whom all his hopes and expectations centered,—or a wife was left deſtitute to mourn the loſs and protection of a kind and tender huſband, Seneca or Epictetus would tell the penſive parent and diſconſolate widow,—that tears and lamentation for the dead were fruitleſs and abſurd!—that to die, was the neceſſary and unavoidable debt of nature;—and as it could admit of no remedy—'twas impious and fooliſh to grieve and fret themſelves upon it,

Upon ſuch ſage counſel, as well as many other leſſons of the ſame ſtamp, the ſame reflection might be applied, which is ſaid to have been made by one of the Roman emperors to one who adminiſtered the ſame conſolations to him on a like occaſion,—to whom adviſing him to be comforted, and make himſelf eaſy, ſince the event had been brought about by a fatality, and could not be helped,—he replied,——"That this was ſo far from leſſening his trouble,—that it was the very circumſtance which occaſioned it."—So that upon the whole—when the true value of theſe, and many more of their current arguments have been weighed and brought to the teſt,—one is led to doubt, whether the greateſt part of their heroes, the moſt renowned for conſtancy, were not much more indebted to good nerves and ſpirits, or the natural happy frame of their tempers, for behaving well, than to any extraordinary helps, which they could be ſuppoſed to receive from their inſtructors. And therefore I ſhould make no ſcruple to aſſert, that one ſuch

inſtance of patience and reſignation as this, which the ſcripture gives us in the perſon of Job, not of one moſt pompouſly declaiming upon the contempt of pain and poverty, but of a man ſunk in the loweſt condition of humanity, to behold him when ſtripped of his eſtate,—his wealth, his friends, his children—cheerfully holding up his head, and entertaining his hard fortune with firmneſs and ſerenity;—and this, not from a ſtoical ſtupidity, but a juſt ſenſe of GOD's providence, and a perſuaſion of his juſtice and goodneſs in all his dealings———Such an example, I ſay, as this, is of more univerſal uſe, ſpeaks truer to the heart, than all the heroic precepts, which the pedantry of philoſophy has to offer.

This leads me to the point I aim at in this diſcourſe; namely, that there are no principles but thoſe of religion to be depended on in caſes of real diſtreſs, and that theſe are able to encounter the worſt emergencies; and to bear us up under all the changes and chances to which our life is ſubject.

Conſider then what virtue the very firſt principle of religion has, and how wonderfully it is conducive to this end. That there is a God, a powerful, a wiſe and good Being, who firſt made the world and continues to govern it;—by whoſe goodneſs all things are deſigned,—and by whoſe providence all things are conducted to bring about the greateſt and beſt ends. The ſorrowful and penſive wretch that was giving way to his misfortunes, and mournfully ſinking under them, the moment this doctrine comes in to his aid, huſhes all his complaints,—and thus ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul;—" It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good,"—without his direction I know that no evil can befal me,—without his permiſſion that no power can hurt me.—It is impoſſible a Being ſo wiſe ſhould miſtake my happineſs;—or that a Being ſo good ſhould contradict it. If he has denied me riches or other advantages—perhaps he foreſees the gratifying my wiſhes would undo me, and by my own abuſe of them be perverted to my ruin.—If he has de-

nied me the requeſt of children,—or in his providence has thought fit to take them from me—how can I ſay—whether he has not dealt kindly with me, and only taken that away which he foreſaw would embitter and ſhorten my days? It does ſo to thouſands, where the diſobedience of a thankleſs child has brought down the parents grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave. Has he viſited me with ſickneſs, poverty, or other diſappoinments?—can I ſay, but theſe are bleſſings in diſguiſe?—ſo many different expreſſions of his care and concern to diſentangle my thoughts from this world, and fix them upon another,—another, a better world beyond this!"—This thought opens a new ſcene of hope and conſolation to the unfortunate:—and as the perſuaſion of a Providence reconciles him to the evils he has ſuffered,—this proſpect of a future life gives him ſtrength to deſpiſe them, and eſteem the light afflictions of this life as they are—not worthy to be compared to what is reſerved for him hereafter.

Things are great or ſmall by compariſon——and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the accounts of his joys and ſufferings from that conſideration, finds all his ſorrows enlarged, and at the cloſe of them will be apt to look back, and caſt the ſame ſad reflection upon the whole, which the patriarch did to Pharaoh,—" That few and evil had been the days of his pilgrimage." But let him lift up his eyes towards heaven, and ſtedfaſtly behold the life and immortality of a future ſtate,——he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever and ever;——like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is returning home——he feels not the weight of his chains, or counts the days of his captivity; but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before.

Theſe are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulating of our ſpirit under the evils of life,—but like great cordials, they are ſeldom uſed but on great occurrences.——In the leſſer evils

of life we ſeem to ſtand unguarded, and our peace and contentment are overthrown, and our happineſs broke in upon by a little impatience of ſpirit, under the croſs and untoward accidents we meet with.——Theſe ſtand unprovided for, and we neglect them as we do the ſlighter indiſpoſitions of the body—which we think not worth treating ſeriouſly—and ſo leave them to nature. In good habits of the body, this may do,——and I would gladly believe, there are ſuch good habits of the temper, ſuch a complexional eaſe and health of heart, as may often ſave the patient much medicine.—We are ſtill to conſider—that however ſuch good frames of mind are got—they are worth preſerving by all rules;—patience and contentment,—which like the treaſure hid in the field for which a man ſold all he had to purchaſe—is of that price that it cannot be had at too great a purchaſe, ſince without it, the beſt condition in life cannot make us happy,—and with it, it is impoſſible we ſhould be miſerable even in the worſt.—Give me leave therefore to

close this discourse with some reflections upon the subject of a contented mind—— and the duty in man of regulating his spirit, in our way through life; —— a subject in every body's mouth ——preached upon daily to our friends and kindred—— but too oft in such a style, as to convince the party lectured, only of this truth;— that we bear the misfortunes of others with excellent tranquillity.

I believe there are thousands so extravagant in their ideas of contentment, as to imagine that it must consist in having every thing in this world turn out the way they wish—that they are to sit down in happiness, and feel themselves so at ease at all points, as to desire nothing better and nothing more. I own there are instances of some, who seem to pass through the world as if all their paths had been strewed with rose-buds of delight;——but a little experience will convince us, 'tis a fatal expectation to go upon.—We are born to trouble; and we may depend upon it whilst we live in this world we shall have it, though with

intermiſſions—that is, in whatever ſtate we are, we ſhall find a mixture of good and evil; and therefore the true way to contentment is to know how to receive theſe certain viciſſitudes of life,—the returns of good and evil, ſo as neither to be exalted by the one, or overthrown by the other, but to bear ourſelves towards every thing which happens with ſuch eaſe and indifference of mind, as to hazard as little as may be. This is the true temperate climate fitted for us by nature, and in which every wiſe man would wiſh to live.—God knows, we are perpetually ſtraying out of it, and by giving wings to our imaginations in the tranſports we dream of, from ſuch or ſuch a ſituation in life, we are carried away alternately into all the extremes of hot and cold, for which, as we are neither fitted by nature, or prepared by expectation, we feel them with all their violence, and with all their danger too.

God, for wiſe reaſons, has made our affairs in this world almoſt as fickle and capricious as ourſelves—Pain and plea-

ſure, like light and darkneſs, ſucceed each other; and he that knows how to accommodate himſelf to their periodical returns, and can wiſely extract the good from the evil—knows only how to live;—this is true contentment, at leaſt all that is to be had of it in this world, and for this every man muſt be indebted not to his fortune but to himſelf.—And indeed it would have been ſtrange, if a duty ſo becoming us as dependent creatures—and ſo neceſſary beſides to all our well-beings, had been placed out of the reach of any in ſome meaſure to put in practice—— and for this reaſon, there is ſcarce any lot ſo low, but there is ſomething in it to ſatisfy the man whom it has befallen; Providence having ſo ordered things, that in every man's cup, how bitter ſoever, there are ſome cordial drops——ſome good circumſtances, which if wiſely extracted, are ſufficient for the purpoſe he wants them,—that is, to make him contented, and if not happy, at leaſt reſigned. May GOD bleſs us all with this ſpirit, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

The Character of Shimei.

2 SAMUEL, XIX. 21. 1ſt part.

But Abiſhai ſaid, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?——

——IT has not a good aſpect——This is the ſecond time *Abiſhai* has propoſed *Shimei*'s deſtruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a ſudden tranſport of indignation, when *Shimei* curſed David.—" *Why ſhould this dead dog, cried Abiſhai,* " *curſe my lord the king? let me go over,* " *I pray thee, and cut off his head.*" —— This had ſomething at leaſt of gallantry in it; for in doing it, he hazarded his own; and beſides, the offender was not otherwiſe to be come at: the ſecond time is in the text; when the offender was abſolutely in their power——when the blood was cool; and the ſuppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, anſwered Abiſhai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a purſuit looks leſs like juſtice than revenge, which is ſo cowardly a paſſion, that it renders Abiſhai's firſt inſtance almoſt inconſiſtent with the ſecond. I ſhall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the diſcourſe ſimply to Shimei; and make ſuch reflections upon his character as may be of uſe to ſociety.

Upon the news of his ſon Abſalom's conſpiracy, David had fled from Jeruſalem, and from his own houſe, for ſafety: the repreſentation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting:——never was a ſcene of ſorrow ſo full of diſtreſs!

The king fled with all his houſehold to ſave himſelf from the ſword of the man he loved: he fled with all the marks of humble ſorrow—"*with his head cover'd and barefoot;*" and as he went by the aſcent of mount Olivet, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays, he wept—ſome gladſome ſcenes, perhaps, which there had paſs'd——ſome hours of feſtivity he had ſhared with Abſalom in better days, preſſed tenderly upon

nature, he wept at this ſad viciſſitude of things;—and all the people that were with him, ſmitten with his affliction, *cover'd each* man *his head—weeping as he went* up.

It was on this occaſion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the ſon of Gera, as we read in the 5th verſe, came out:—was it with the choiceſt oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds?—Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou cameſt out, Shimei, to add thy portion—

"*And* as *he came, he curſed David, and threw ſtones and caſt duſt at him; and thus ſaid Shimei, when he curſed: Go to, thou man of Belial, thou haſt ſought blood,—and behold thou* art *caught in thy own miſchief;* for now hath the *Lord returned* upon thee all the blood *of Saul and his houſe.*"

There is no ſmall degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a ſeaſon to give a mark of enmity and ill-will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impreſſion—at another time wounds the heart; and like a ſhaft flying with the

wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would ſcarce have reached the object aimed at.

This ſeemed to have been Shimei's hopes; but exceſs of malice makes men too quickſighted even for their own purpoſe. Could Shimei poſſibly have waited for the ebb of David's paſſions, and till the firſt great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood muſt have hurt him—his heart was poſſeſſed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly ſting which Abſalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a ſtranger—" *Behold my ſon Abſalom, who came out of my bowels, ſeeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*"

An injury unanſwered in courſe grows weary of itſelf, and dies away in a voluntary remorſe.

In bad diſpoſitions capable of no reſtraint but fear——it has a different effect——the ſilent digeſtion of one wrong

provokes a ſecond.—He purſues him with the ſame invective; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's ſide over againſt him; and curſed as he went, and caſt duſt at him.*

The inſolence of baſe minds in ſucceſs is boundleſs; and would ſcarce admit of a compariſon, did not they themſelves furniſh us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the ſame poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adverſary, in ſome inſtances ſeems to exalt them above the point of courage, ſinks them in others even below cowardice.——Not unlike ſome little particles of matter ſtruck off from the ſurface of the dirt by ſunſhine—dance and ſport there whilſt it laſts—but the moment 'tis withdrawn—they fall down—for duſt they are—and unto duſt they will return——whilſt firmer and larger bodies preſerve the ſtations which nature has aſſigned them, ſubjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This laſt did not ſeem to be Shimei's caſe; in all David's proſperity, there is

no mention made of him—he thruſt himſelf forward into the circle, and poſſibly was number'd amongſt friends and well-wiſhers.

When the ſcene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his houſe in deſpair—Shimei is the firſt man we hear of, who comes out againſt him.

The wheel turns round once more; Abſalom is caſt down and David returns in peace—Shimei ſuits his behaviour to the occaſion, and is the firſt man alſo who haſtes to greet him——and had the wheel turn'd round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare ſay, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermoſt.

O Shimei! would to Heaven when thou waſt ſlain, that all thy family had been ſlain with thee; and not one of thy reſemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and repleniſhed the earth; and if I prophecy rightly——ye will in the end *ſubdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has ſo bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei; whilſt power meets with honeſt checks, and the

evils of life with honeſt refuge, the world will never be undone: but thou, Shimei, haſt ſapp'd it at both extremes; for thou corrupteſt proſperity—and 'tis thou who haſt broken the heart of poverty; and ſo long as worthleſs ſpirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we ſhall never want. O! it infeſts the court——the camp—the cabinet—it infeſts the church go where you will in every quarter in every profeſſion, you ſee a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay.—

—Haſte, Shimei!—haſte; or thou wilt be undone for ever Shimei girdeth up his loins and ſpeedeth after him—behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, ſo that he who driveth, driveth on heavily—Shimei doubles his ſpeed—but 'tis the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a ſandy deſert, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more——ſtay, Shimei! 'tis your patron——your friend——your benefactor; 'tis the man who has raiſed you from the dunghill

——'tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the riſe and fall of it, with all the variations from ſcorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the ſmile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—ſee—it hangs over Shimei's brow ——Haſt *thou been* ſpoken for to the king or the captain of the hoſt without ſucceſs?——look not into the court-kalender——the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face—Art thou in debt?—though not to Shimei—no matter——the worſt officer of the law ſhall not be more inſolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty ſo black—is it of ſo general a concern, that thou and all thy family muſt riſe up as one man to reproach it? ——when it loſt every thing—did it loſe the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, ſtrip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and ſupple the temper of your race?—Truſt me, ye have much to anſwer for; it is this treatment which it has

ever met with from ſpirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greateſt of evils, and ſhun it as the worſt diſgrace——and what is it, I beſeech you——what is it that man will not do to keep clear of ſo ſore an imputation and puniſhment?—is it not to fly from this, that *he riſes early—late takes reſt; and eats the bread of carefulneſs?*—that he plots, contrives—ſwears—lies—ſhuffles—puts on all ſhapes—tries all garments——wears them, with this, or that ſide outward——juſt as it favours his eſcape?

They who have conſidered our nature affirm, that ſhame and diſgrace are two of the moſt inſupportable evils of human life: the courage and ſpirits of many have maſtered other misfortunes, and borne themſelves up againſt them; but the wiſeſt and beſt of ſouls have not been a match for theſe; and we have many a tragical inſtance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh —so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedness, are nothing to it, they have some counterpoise of good: and besides they are directed by Providence, and must be submitted to: but those are afflictions not from the hand of GOD or nature—"*for they do come forth of the* DUST, and most properly may be said *to spring out of the* GROUND, and this is the reason they lay such stress upon our patience,—and in the end, create such a distrust of the world, as makes us look up —and pray, *Let me fall into thy hands, O God! but let me not fall into the hands of men.*"

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphas to Job in the day of his distress —— "*acquaint thyself*, said he, NOW *with God:*" indeed his poverty seemed to have left him no other: the swords of the Sabeans had frightened them away——all but a few friends; and of what kind they

were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*——ſays enough.

It is an inſtance which gives one great concern for human nature, " That a man, *who always wept* for him who was in *trouble*;——*who never ſaw any periſh for want of cloathing*;—*who never ſuffered the ſtranger to lodge in the ſtreet, but opened his door to the traveller*;"——*that a man* of ſo good a character,—" *that he never cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail,—or had eaten his morſel by himſelf alone, and the fatherleſs had not eaten thereof*;"—that ſuch a man, the moment he fell into poverty, ſhould have occaſion to cry out for quarter,—*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me.*—— Gentleneſs and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardeſt heart, and charm the fierceſt ſpirit; bind up the moſt violent hand, and ſtill the moſt abuſive tongue;—but the experiment failed in a ſtronger inſtance of him, whoſe meat and drink it was to do us good; and in purſuit of which, whoſe whole life was a con-

tinued ſcene of kindneſs and of inſults, for which we muſt go back to the ſame explanation with which we ſet out,—and that is, the ſcandal of poverty.———

"*This fellow, we know not whence he is*" ——was the popular cry of one part; and with thoſe who ſeemed to know better, the quere did not leſſen the diſgrace; —Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary?—of Mary; great GOD of Iſrael! What!—of the meaneſt of thy people! (*for he had not regarded the low eſtate* of his hand-maiden)—and of the pooreſt, too! (for ſhe had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle dove).

That the SAVIOUR of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,—was a crime never to be forgiven: and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its ſupport, were ſtronger arguments on its ſide, than his humiliation could be againſt it,—— yet the offence ſtill remained;— they looked for the redemption of Iſrael;

but they would have it only in thoſe dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldſmith's balance!—was this religion for you?—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whoſe principles and promiſes ſhewed more like the curſes of the law, than its bleſſings:——for they called for ſufferings, and promiſed little but perſecutions.

In truth, it is not eaſy for tribulation or diſtreſs, for nakedneſs or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the ſcorn and reproaches, which were ſure to be the portion of every one who believed a myſtery ſo diſcredited by the world, and ſo unpalatable to all its paſſions and pleaſures.

But to bring this ſermon to its proper concluſion.

If Aſtrea or Juſtice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty firſt became ridiculous, it is

matter of conſolation, that the GOD of Juſtice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowneſs of our condition may be expoſed to, from a mean and undiſcerning world,——that we walk in the preſence of the greateſt and moſt generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and ſtraitneſs of mind, and all thoſe little and illiberal paſſions, with which we hourly inſult each other.

The worſt part of mankind are not always to be conquered—but if they are ——'tis by the imitation of theſe qualities which muſt do it:—'tis true—as I've ſhewn——they may fail; but ſtill all is not loſt,——for if we conquer not the world———in the very attempts to do it, we ſhall at leaſt conquer ourſelves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON XVII.

The Caſe of Hezekiah and the Meſſengers*.

2 KINGS, XX. 15.

And he ſaid, What have they ſeen in thine houſe; and Hezekiah anſwered, All the things that are in my houſe have they ſeen; there is nothing amongſt all my treaſures that I have not ſhewn them.

——AND where was the harm, you'll ſay, in all this?

"An eaſtern prince, the ſon of Baladine, had ſent meſſengers with preſents as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his ſickneſs; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted conſiſtently with himſelf; *he received and entertained the men, and hearkened unto them*, and before he ſent them away, he courteouſly ſhewed them all

* Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD, at Paris, 1763.

that was worth a ſtranger's curioſity in his houſe and his kingdom——and in this, ſeemed only to have diſcharged himſelf of what urbanity or the *etiquette* of courts might require." Notwithſtanding this, in the verſe which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiſs; and as a puniſhment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in ſtore unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon, ——the very place from whence the meſſengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not ſeem to have deſerved. To ſet this matter in a clear light, it will be neceſſary to enlarge upon the whole ſtory, ——the reflections which will ariſe out of it, as we go along, may help us——at leaſt, I hope they will be of uſe on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Aſſyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was ſick even unto death; and that GOD ſends the prophet Iſaiah, with the unwelcome meſ-

ſage, *that he ſhould ſet his houſe in order, for that he ſhould die, and not live.*

There are many inſtances of men, who have received ſuch news with the greateſt eaſe of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with ſmiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from ſtrength of ſpirits and the natural cheerfulneſs of their temper,—or that they knew the world, and cared not for it,——or expected a better——yet thouſands of good men, with all the helps of philoſophy, and againſt all the aſſurances of a well-ſpent life, that the change muſt be to their account,—upon the approach of death have ſtill lean'd towards this world, and wanted ſpirits and reſolution to bear the ſhock of a ſeparation from it for ever.

This, in ſome meaſure, ſeemed to have been Hezekiah's caſe; for tho' he had walked before GOD in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight,——yet we find that the haſty ſummons afflicted him greatly;——that upon the delivery of the meſſage he wept

ſore;——that he turned his face towards the wall,——perhaps for the greater ſecrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himſelf thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his GOD, with greater and more fervent attention,

——And he pray'd, and ſaid, O LORD! I beſeech thee remember——O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou fear that GOD had forgotten thee? or, how couldſt thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he call'd thee to receive its recompence?

But here it appears of what materials man is made: he purſues happineſs——and yet is ſo content with miſery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,——and ſay, "*It is good, Lord! "to be here, and to build tabernacles of "reſt*;" and ſo long as we are clothed with fleſh, and nature has ſo great a ſhare within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the ſweetneſs of life, notwithſtanding all its care and diſappointments.

This natural weakneſs, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earneſt prayer for life; and yet from the ſucceſs it met with, and the immediate change of GOD's purpoſe thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it muſt have been accompanied with ſome meritorious and more generous motive; and if we ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, becauſe that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whoſe preſervation lay next his heart, we may conſiſtently enough give this ſenſe to his prayer.

" O God! remember how I have walk-
" ed before thee in truth;——how much
" I have done to reſcue thy religion from
" error and falſehood;——thou knoweſt
" that the eyes of the world are fixed
" upon me, as one that hath forſaken
" their idolatry, and reſtored thy wor-
" ſhip;—that I ſtand in the midſt of a
" crooked and corrupt generation, which
" looks thro' all my actions, and watches
" all events which happen to me: if
" now they ſhall ſee me ſnatched away in

" the midſt of my days and ſervice, How " will thy great name ſuffer in my ex- " tinction? Will not the heathen ſay, " This it is to ſerve the GOD of Iſrael! " ——How faithfully did Hezekiah walk " before him?—What enemies did he " bring upon himſelf, in too warmly " promoting his worſhip? and now when " the hour of ſickneſs and diſtreſs came " upon him, and he moſt wanted the " aid of his God:—behold how he was " forſaken!"

It is not unreaſonable to aſcribe ſome ſuch pious and more diſintereſted motive to Hezekiah's deſire of life, from the iſſue and ſucceſs of his prayer:——*for it came to paſs, before Iſaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, ſaying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have ſeen his tears; and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occaſion, as we read in the 12th verſe of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, ſon of Baladine king of Babylon, ſent letters and a preſent unto

Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his ſickneſs and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great ſearchers into the ſecrets of nature, eſpecially into the motions of the celeſtial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that diſtance, of the ſtrange appearance of the ſhadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned upon what account, and in whoſe favour, ſuch a ſign was given; ſo that this aſtronomical miracle, beſides the political motive which it would ſuggeſt of courting ſuch a favourite of heaven, had been ſufficient by itſelf to have led a curious people as far as Jeruſalem, that they might ſee the man for whoſe ſake the Sun had forſook his courſe.

And here we ſee how hard it is to ſtand the ſhock of proſperity, and how much truer a proof we give of our ſtrength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adverſity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,——nothing unmanned him: when beſieged by the Aſſyrian hoſt, which ſhut him up in Jeruſa-

lem, and threatened his deſtruction,—he ſtood unſhaken, and depended upon God's ſuccour.——When caſt down upon his bed of ſickneſs, and threatened with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,——wept and prayed, and depended upon God's mercy:—but no ſooner does proſperity return upon him, and the meſſengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatneſs, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and ſinks under the weight of his good fortune, and with a tranſport unbecoming a wiſe man upon it, 'tis ſaid, he hearken'd unto the men, and ſhewed them all the houſe of his precious things, the ſilver and the gold, the ſpices and the precious ointments, and all the houſe of his armour, and all that was found in his treaſures; that there was nothing in his houſe, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah ſhew'd them not; for tho' it is not expreſsly ſaid here (tho' it is in the parallel paſſage in Chronicles),—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak tranſport of

oſtentation;——yet as we are ſure GOD could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reaſonably conclude that this was his, and that he who ſearches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the bleſſings he had given him, and that it was juſt to make what was the occaſion of his pride, become the inſtrument of his puniſhment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in ſtore until that day, ſhould be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the meſſengers had come who had been eye-witneſſes of his folly.

" O Hezekiah! how couldſt thou " provoke GOD to bring this judgment " upon thee? How could thy ſpirit, all- " meek and gentle as it was, have ever " fallen into this ſnare? Were thy trea- " ſures rich as the earth—What! was " thy heart ſo vain as to be lifted up " therewith? Was not all that was va- " luable in the world—nay, was not hea- " ven itſelf almoſt at thy command whilſt " thou waſt humble? and, How was it,

" that thou couldſt barter away all this,
" for what was lighter than a bubble,
" and deſecrate an action ſo full of cour-
" teſy and kindneſs as thine appeared to
" be, by ſuffering it to take its riſe from
" ſo polluted a fountain?"

There is ſcarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analyſis of this kind.

We are a ſtrange compound; and ſomething foreign from what charity would ſuſpect, ſo eternally twiſts itſelf into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where intereſt liſts under it all the powers of diſguiſe,—but even in the moſt indifferent of our actions—not worth a fallacy——by force of habit, we continue it; ſo that whatever a man is about,——obſerve him,——he ſtands arm'd inſide and out with two motives; an oſtenſible one for the world,——and another which he reſerves for his own private uſe;—this, you may ſay, the world has no concern with: it might have been ſo; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and ſtealing from it a cha-

racter, inſtead of winning one;——we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deſerving it. Let us ſee if ſome ſocial virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her ſons to be generous and brave——and her daughters to be chaſte and courteous.——But why do we want her inſtructions?——Aſk the comedian who is taught a part he feels not——

Is it that the principles of religion want ſtrength, or that the real paſſion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?——GOD! thou knoweſt they carry us too high——we want not *to be*——but *to ſeem*——

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: ſee what diſquieting, intriguing, and ſhifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing:—three grains of ho-

neſty would ſave him all this trouble——alas! he has them not.——

Behold a ſecond, under a ſhow of piety hiding the impurities of a debauched life:——he is juſt entering the houſe of GOD:——would he was more pure—or leſs pious:—but then he could not gain his point.

Obſerve a third going on almoſt in the ſame track, with what an inflexible ſanctity of deportment he ſuſtains himſelf as he advances:—every line in his face writes abſtinence;——every ſtride looks like a check upon his deſires: ſee, I beſeech you, how he is cloak'd up with ſermons, prayers, and ſacraments; and ſo bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to ſpare for a worldly purpoſe;—he has armour at leaſt—Why does he put it on? Is there no ſerving GOD without all this? Muſt the garb of religion be extended ſo wide to the danger of its rending?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the ſecret——and, What is that?

——That the ſaint has no religion at all.

—But here comes GENEROSITY; giving ——not to a decayed artiſt——but to the arts and ſciences themſelves.—See,—he *builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet;* but whole ſchools and colleges for thoſe who come after. LORD! how they will magnify his name!——'tis in capitals already; the firſt—the higheſt, in the gilded rent-roll of every hoſpital and aſylum.——

——One honeſt tear ſhed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic ſet of creatures does ſimulation make us! Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, ſo viſible in the airs of one half of that great aſſembly, ſhould ariſe from nothing elſe, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of conſequence, penetration, parts, and conduct?—What a noiſe amongſt the claimants about it! Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,—— and honeſty, almoſt out of knavery:—— *Chaſtity*, never once in harm's way,—

and courage, like a Spaniſh ſoldier upon an Italian ſtage—a bladder full of wind.—

——Hark! that, the ſound of that trumpet,——let not my ſoldier run,——'tis ſome good Chriſtian giving alms. O, PITY, thou gentleſt of human paſſions! ſoft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with ſo loud an inſtrument.

Thus ſomething jars, and will for ever jar in theſe caſes: impoſture is all diſſonance, let what maſter ſoever of it undertake the part; let him harmoniſe and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilſt we have ears to hear, we ſhall diſtinguiſh it; 'tis truth only which is conſiſtent and ever in harmony with itſelf: it ſits upon our lips, like the natural notes of ſome melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;——it racks no invention to let ourſelves alone, and needs fear no critic, to have the ſame excellency in the heart, which appears in the action.

It is a pleaſing alluſion the Scripture makes uſe of in calling us ſometimes a houſe, and ſometimes a temple, accord-

ing to the more or leſs exalted qualities of the ſpiritual gueſt which is lodged within us: whether this is the preciſe ground of the diſtinction, I will not affirm; but thus much may be ſaid, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and ſingleneſs of heart which muſt make the dedication: 'tis this which muſt firſt diſtinguiſh them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impoſitions are practiſed by the hoſt upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment and returns not again.

We all take notice, how cloſe and reſerved people are; but we do not take notice, at the ſame time, that every one may have ſomething to conceal, as well as ourſelves; and that we are only marking the diſtances and taking the meaſures of ſelf-defence from each other in the very inſtances we complain of: this is ſo true, that there is ſcarce any character ſo rare, as a man of real open and generous integrity——who carries his heart in his hand,——who ſays the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though

no one can diſlike the character,—yet, diſcretion generally ſhakes her head,—and the world ſoon lets him into the reaſon.

"*O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging* "*of way-faring men! that I might leave* "*ſuch a people, and go from them.*" Where is the man of a nice ſenſe of truth and ſtrong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the ſame wiſh; and where lies the wilderneſs to which ſome one has not fled, from the ſame melancholy impulſe?

Thus much for thoſe who give occaſion to be thought ill of;——let us ſay a word or two unto thoſe who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,——I will forbear to ſay, becauſe I do not think it, that 'tis a breach of Chriſtian charity to think or ſpeak ill of our neighbour, &c.

——We cannot avoid it: our opinions muſt follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in ſuch engagements and ſituations, that 'tis our duties to ſpeak what our opinions are—but GOD forbid that this ever ſhould be done but from its beſt

motive—the ſenſe of what is due to virtue, governed by diſcretion and the utmoſt fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwiſe, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocriſy, and ſo down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy all that look'd ſeemly,——we ſhould leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to ſay to a character leſs equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of thoſe, who from a general diſtruſt of all that looks diſintereſted, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,——immediately fall foul upon its motives: *Does Job ſerve God for nought?* What a vile inſinuation! Beſides, the queſtion was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man?—but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances were ſtrong on his ſide: indeed it might have been otherwiſe; it was poſſible Job might be inſincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible master, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forsake his vices?——the position is not to be allowed,——no; his vices have forsaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear GOD and say her prayers?——she is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan?—— Poverty! thou hast no genealogies:——See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the best part of their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;—wrest it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy;——undo it all—I beseech you: give him back his honour,——restore the jewel you have taken from him—replace him in the eye of the world——

——it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which should come in here.——I will

truſt them with yourſelves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce ſuch fruits as will not ſet your teeth on edge——for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praiſe of GOD and the happineſs of the world, which I wiſh.

SERMON XVIII.

The Levite and his Concubine.

JUDGES, XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that there was a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.

——A CONCUBINE!—but the text accounts for it, *for in thoſe days there was no king in Iſrael*, and the Leviſe, you will ſay, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,—— and ſo, you may add, did his concubine too,—*for ſhe played the whore againſt him, and went away.*——

——Then ſhame and grief go with her, and wherever ſhe ſeeks a ſhelter, may the hand of juſtice ſhut the door againſt her!——

Not ſo; for ſhe went unto her father's houſe in Bethlehem-judah, and was with

him four whole months.——Bleſſed interval for meditation upon the fickleneſs and vanity of this world and its pleaſures! I ſee the holy man upon his knees,——— with hands compreſſed to his boſom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had ſo long ſhared his affections, was fled.——

The text gives a different picture of his ſituation; *for he aroſe and went after her to ſpeak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his ſervant with him, and a couple of aſſes: and ſhe brought him unto her father's houſe; and when the father of the damſel ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him*—

——A moſt ſentimental group! you'll ſay: and ſo it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing: give but the outlines of a ſtory,——let *Spleen* or *Prudery* ſnatch the pencil, and they will finiſh it with ſo many hard ſtrokes, and with ſo dirty a colouring, that *Candour* and *Courteſy* will ſit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous ſpirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid

interpreters, but of your own failings, ——to you I addreſs myſelf, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the miſguided,——whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often muſt ye repeat it, "That ſuch a one's doing ſo or ſo"—is not ſufficient evidence by itſelf to overthrow the accuſed? That our actions ſtand ſurrounded with a thouſand circumſtances which do not preſent themſelves at firſt ſight:—that the firſt ſprings and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper ſtill;——and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thouſands of them may have err'd merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and even when from the heart,——that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted, ——the force of the paſſions,——the ſuitableneſs of the object, and the many ſtruggles of virtue before ſhe fell,—— may be ſo many appeals from juſtice to the judgment-ſeat of pity.

Here then let us ſtop a moment, and give the ſtory of the Levite and his con-

cubine a ſecond hearing: like all others, much of it depends upon the telling; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a ſtory on which the heart cannot be at a loſs for what to ſay, or the imagination for what to ſuppoſe——the danger is, humanity may ſay too much.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of Mount Ephraim, took unto himſelf a Concubine.——

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong,——Why didſt thou ſet ſo enſnaring an example before the eyes of thy deſcendants? and, Why did the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Iſaac and Jacob, bleſs ſo often the ſeed of ſuch intercourſes, and promiſe to multiply and make princes come out of them?

GOD can diſpenſe with his own laws: and accordingly we find the holieſt of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture, whoſe hearts cleaved moſt unto GOD, accommodating themſelves as well as they

could to the diſpenſation: that Abraham had Hagar;—that Jacob, beſides his two wives, Rachael and Leah, took alſo unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes deſcended: that David had ſeven wives and ten concubines;—Rehoboam, ſixty;——and that, in whatever caſes it became reproachable, it ſeemed not ſo much the thing itſelf, as the abuſe of it, which made it ſo: this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whoſe exceſs became an inſult upon the privileges of mankind; for by the ſame plan of luxury, which made it neceſſary to have forty thouſand ſtalls of horſes,—he had unfortunately miſcalculated his other wants, and ſo had ſeven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wiſe——deluded man! was it not that thou madeſt ſome amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!——three hundred ——but let us turn aſide, I beſeech you, from ſo ſad a ſtumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concu-

bine, or a wife a concubine, to diſtinguiſh her from the more infamous ſpecies, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewiſh *œconomicks*, theſe differ'd little from the wife, except in ſome outward ceremonies and ſtipulations, but agreed with her, in all the true eſſences of marriage, and gave themſelves up to the huſband (for ſo he is call'd), with faith plighted, with ſentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to ſhare his ſolitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in ſuch a ſituation; for notwithſtanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handſome things ſaid upon the ſweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet ſtill "*it is not good for man* "*to be alone:*" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant ſtuns our ears with upon the ſubject, ever give one anſwer of ſatisfaction to the mind; in the midſt of the loudeſt vauntings of philoſophy, Nature will have her yearnings for ſociety

and friendſhip;——a good heart wants ſome object to be kind to——and the beſt parts of our blood, and the pureſt of our ſpirits, ſuffer moſt under the deſtitution.

Let the torpid monk ſeek heaven comfortleſs and alone.——God ſpeed him! For my own part, I fear, I ſhould never ſo find the way: let me be wiſe and religious——but let me be man: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee——give me ſome companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our ſhadows lengthen as the ſun goes down;——to whom I may ſay, How freſh is the face of nature! How ſweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are theſe fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his paſſover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,——ſhe wantonly turn'd aſide unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: but

in this they have the advantage; whatever be the ſenſe of their wrongs, that pride ſtands not ſo watchful a centinel over their forgiveneſs, as it does in the breaſts of the fierce and froward: we ſhould all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpoſe its ill-office in remiſſions, eſpecially of this kind: the truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts ſo like an unfeeling engine in all caſes without diſtinction, that it requires all the firmneſs of the moſt ſettled humanity to bear up againſt it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to ſuſtain with himſelf—his concubine——and the ſentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him:—— much matter for pleading—and many an embarraſſing account on all ſides: in a period of four whole months, every paſſion would take its empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the leſs unfriendly ones, PITY would find ſome moments to be heard——RELIGION herſelf would

not be ſilent,——CHARITY would have much to ſay,—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he paſs'd by, would ſolicit the recollection of former kindneſs, and awaken an advocate in her behalf more powerful than them all.

"I grant——I grant it all"—he would cry,—"'tis foul! 'tis faithleſs!——but, "Why is the door of mercy to be ſhut "for ever againſt it? and, Why is it to "be the only ſad crime that the injured "may not remit, or reaſon or imagination paſs over without a ſcar?——Is it "the blackeſt? In what catalogue of human offences is it ſo marked? or, Is "it, that of all others 'tis a blow moſt "grievous to be endured?——the heart "cries out, It is ſo: but let me aſk my "own, What paſſions are they which "give edge and force to this weapon "which has ſtruck me? and, whether it "is not my own pride, as much as my "virtues, which at this moment excite "the greateſt part of that intolerable

" anguiſh in the wound which I am lay-
" ing to her charge? But, merciful hea-
" ven, was it otherwiſe, why is an un-
" happy creature of thine to be perſe-
" cuted by me with ſo much cruel re-
" venge and rancorous deſpite as my
" firſt tranſport called for? Have faults
" no extenuations?——Makes it nothing,
" that when the treſpaſs was committed,
" ſhe forſook the partner of her guilt,
" and fled directly to her father's houſe?
" And is there no difference betwixt one
" propenſely going out of the road and
" continuing there, through depravity of
" will——and a hapleſs wanderer ſtray-
" ing by deluſion, and warily treading
" back her ſteps?——Sweet is the look
" of ſorrow for an offence, in a heart
" determined never to commit it more!
" ——Upon that altar only could I of-
" fer up my wrongs. Cruel is the pu-
" niſhment which an ingenuous mind
" will take upon itſelf, from the remorſe
" of ſo hard a treſpaſs againſt me,——
" and if that will not balance the ac-
" count,——juſt GOD! let me forgive

" the reſt. Mercy well becomes the " heart of all thy creatures,——but moſt " of thy ſervant, a Levite, who offers up " ſo many daily ſacrifices to thee, for the " tranſgreſſions of thy people.——

—" But to little purpoſe," he would add, " have I ſerved at thy altar, where " my buſineſs was to ſue for mercy, had " I not learn'd to practiſe it."

Peace and happineſs reſt upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think.

So he aroſe, and went after her, to ſpeak friendly to her—in the original—" to ſpeak " to her heart;"——to apply to their former endearments,—and to aſk, How ſhe could be ſo unkind to him, and ſo very unkind to herſelf?——

——Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are ſweet: not like the ſtrivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;—but they are calm and courteous, like the ſpirit which watches over their character: How could ſuch a temper woo the damſel, and not bring her back? or,

How could the father of the damsel, in such a scene, have a heart open to any impressions but those mentioned in the text;——*That when he saw him, he rejoiced to meet him*;——urged his stay from day to day, with that most irresistible of all invitations,—" *Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*"

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in settling this account, *Love* would surely be of the party: great—great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itself: and so it was——for the Levite arose up, and with him his Concubine and his servant, and they departed.

It serves no purpose to pursue the story further; the catastrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpose for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it, and that is, to discredit rash judgment, and illustrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courtesy which the *dramatis personæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Almost one half of our time is spent in tell-

ing and hearing evil of one another—some unfortunate knight is always upon the ſtage——and every hour brings forth ſomething ſtrange and terrible to fill up our diſcourſe and our aſtoniſhment, "How people can be ſo fooliſh!"——and 'tis well if the compliment ends there; ſo that there is not a ſocial virtue for which there is ſo conſtant a demand,—or, conſequently, ſo well worth cultivating, as that which oppoſes this unfriendly current——many and rapid are the ſprings which feed it, and various and ſudden, GOD knows, are the gueſts which render it unſafe to us in this ſhort paſſage of our life: let us make the diſcourſe as ſerviceable as we can, by tracing ſome of the moſt remarkable of them up to their ſource.

And, firſt, there is one miſerable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if ſpeculation is ſuppoſed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from ſome of our buſieſt inquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we ac-

count for phenomena, before we are ſure of their exiſtence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much leſs to be martyr'd), ſaid Feſtus;——*and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?* cried Nicodemus; *and he that anſwereth*, or determineth, *a matter before he has heard it,——it is folly and a ſhame unto him.*—We are generally in ſuch a haſte to make our own decrees, that we paſs over the juſtice of theſe,——and then the ſcene is ſo changed by it, that 'tis our folly only which is real, and that of the accuſed, which is imaginary; through too much precipitancy it will happen ſo; and then the jeſt is ſpoil'd—or we have criticiſed our own ſhadow.

A ſecond way is, when the proceſs goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information,——but do it from thoſe ſuſpected evidences, againſt which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us, "*not to judge according to appearance:*"——in truth, 'tis behind theſe that moſt of the things which blind human judgment lie

concealed,——and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,—— which are not:——*Chriſt came eating and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!*——he ſat with ſinners——he was their friend:—— in many caſes of which kind, *Truth*, like a modeſt matron, ſcorns art—and diſdains to preſs herſelf forwards into the circle to be ſeen;——ground ſufficient for *Suſpicion* to draw up the libel——for *Malice* to give the torture,—or raſh *Judgment* to ſtart up and paſs a final ſentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote miſconduct are leſs diſputable, but are commented upon with an aſperity of cenſure, which a humane or a gracious temper would ſpare: an abhorrence againſt what is criminal, is ſo fair a plea for this, and looks ſo like virtue in the face, that in a ſermon againſt raſh judgment, it would be unſeaſonable to call it in queſtion,——and yet, I declare, in the fulleſt torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deſerve, that the ſimple apoſtrophe, "who made me to differ? why was not

I an example?" would touch my heart more, and give me a better earneſt of the commentators,—than the moſt corroſive period you could add. The puniſhment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it——and were it not,——'tis piteous, the tongue of a Chriſtian, whoſe religion is all candour and courteſy, ſhould be made the executioner. We find in the diſcourſe between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet ſtill the patriarch treated him with mild language:—*Son! Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime*, &c. &c.—and in the diſpute about the body of Moſes, between the Archangel and the devil (himſelf), St. Jude tells us, he durſt not bring a railing accuſation againſt him;—'twas unworthy his high character, ——and, indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the paſſage), the devil had been too hard for him at railing,—— 'twas his own weapon,——and the baſeſt ſpirits, after his example, are the moſt expert at it.

This leads me to the obſervation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the deſire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honeſtly by the title, by ſhrewd and ſarcaſtic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is ſetting up trade upon the broken ſtock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:——ſo, much good may't do them with what honour they can get,——the furtheſt extent of which, I think, is, to be praiſed, as we do ſome ſauces, with tears in our eyes: It is a commerce moſt illiberal; and as it requires no vaſt capital, too many embark in it, and ſo long as there are bad paſſions to be gratified, —and bad heads to judge, with ſuch it may paſs for wit, or at leaſt, like ſome vile relation, whom all the family is aſhamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main eſſence of it was ſatire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterneſs* and *Saltneſs*,—that

is,——between the malignity and the feſtivity of wit,——the one is a mere quickneſs of apprehenſion, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of ſpirits, ſo pure and abſtracted from perſons, that willingly it hurts no man: or if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the abſurdity, and let it paſs.——He may ſmile at the ſhape of the obeliſk raiſed to another's fame,——but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.——

What then, ye raſh cenſurers of the world! Have ye no manſions for your credit, but thoſe from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to ſhine in, that ye deſcend for it into the low caverns of abuſe and crimination? Have ye no ſeats—— but thoſe of the ſcornful to ſit down in? If *Honour* has miſtook his road, or the *Virtues*, in their exceſſes, have approached too near the confines of VICE, are they

therefore to be caſt down the precipice? Muſt BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one——one falſe ſtep? And ſhall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thouſand the fair penitent may have left,——ſhall not one of them be ſuffered to ſtand by her?——Juſt GOD of Heaven and earth!

——But thou art merciful, loving, and righteous, and lookeſt down with pity upon theſe wrongs thy ſervants do unto each other; pardon us, we beſeech thee, for them, and all our tranſgreſſions; let it not be remember'd, that we were brethren of the ſame fleſh, the ſame feelings and infirmities. O my GOD! write it not down in thy book, that thou madeſt us merciful after thy own image;——that thou haſt given us a religion ſo courteous,——ſo good temper'd,——that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the ſoreneſs of our natures, and ſweeten our ſpirits, that we might live with ſuch kind intercourſe in this world, as will fit us to exiſt together in a better.

SERMON XIX.

Felix's Behaviour towards Paul, examined.

ACTS, XXIV, 26.

He hoped alſo, that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him.

A NOBLE object to take up the conſideration of the Roman governor!

——"*He hoped that money ſhould have been given him!*"——for what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor ſcrip of a diſciple of the carpenter's ſon, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and ſufferings.——

And was this Felix!——the great, the noble Felix!——Felix the happy!——the gallant Felix, who kept Druſilla!

——Could he do this?——baſe paſſion! What canſt thou not make us do?

Let us conſider the whole tranſaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accuſed before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,——of being a peſtilent fellow——a mover of ſeditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.——To which accuſations, the apoſtle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verſe to this purport. He ſhews him, firſt, that the whole charge was deſtitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce againſt him, if they had it;——that, on the contrary, he was ſo far from being the man Tertullus had repreſented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then ſtood charged,——and which they called Hereſy, led him to be the moſt unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exerciſe which it demanded of him, of having a conſcience void of offence at all times, both towards GOD and man;

that conſiſtently with this, his adverſaries had neither found him in the temple diſputing with any man, neither raiſing up the people, neither in the ſynagogue, or in the city,——for this he appeals to themſelves:——that it was but twelve days ſince he came up to Jeruſalem for to worſhip:——that, during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noiſe, without tumult: this he calls upon the Jews who came from Aſia, and were eye-witneſſes of his behaviour, to atteſt;——and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in ſo ſtrong a manner, and with ſuch plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adverſaries to reply.

There was, however, ſtill one adverſary in this court,——though ſilent, yet not ſatisfied.——

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyſelf is riſen up,——'tis AVARICE, and that too in the moſt fatal place for the priſoner it could have taken poſ-

ſeſſion of,——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly—(that is) releaſed him without reward,——this ſubtile advocate told him he would loſe one of the profits of his employment—and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occaſionally explained in his defence,——it told him, he might loſe the employment itſelf;——ſo that notwithſtanding the character of the apoſtle appeared (as it was) moſt ſpotleſs, and the faith he profeſſed ſo very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its conſent,—yet, at the ſame time, the paſſions rebell'd, and ſo ſtrong an intereſt was formed thereby, againſt the firſt impreſſions in favour of the man and his cauſe, that both were diſmiſſed;——the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came; the other to the hardſhips of a priſon for two whole years,——hoping, as the text informs us, that money ſhould have been given him; and even at the laſt, when he left the province, willing to do the

Jews a pleasure,—that is,—to serve his interest in another shape, with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheless, left the holy man bound, and consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement, in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction; and could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul, —(for she was a daughter of Abraham ——as well as of Eve)——was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up with-

out ceremony to Felix, for which cauſe, though ſhe is here called his wife, ſhe was, in reaſon and juſtice, the wife of another man,—and conſequently lived in an open ſtate of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occaſion to argue upon the morality of the Goſpel——and urged the eternal laws of juſtice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chaſtity was a branch,——it was ſcarce poſſible to frame his diſcourſe ſo (had he wiſhed to temporize), but that either her intereſt or her love muſt have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that ſhe trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine ſhe was affected with other paſſions, of which the apoſtle might feel the effects——and 'twas well he ſuffered no more, if two ſuch violent enemies as luſt and avarice were combined againſt him.

But this by the way——for as the text ſeems only to acknowledge one of theſe motives, it is not our buſineſs to aſſign the other.

It is obſervable, that this ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking, in the epiſtle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this ſame ruling paſſion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own ſufferings had no ſmall ſhare in the ſeverity of the reflection.——Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a ſubordinate and miniſterial paſſion, exerciſed for the ſupport of ſome other vices: and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or luſt, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the leaſt mercy and diſcretion; in which caſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the root of other evils, but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have ſaid upon covetouſneſs, as a vice not naturally cruel: it is not apt to repreſent itſelf to our imaginations, at firſt ſight, under that idea; we conſider it only as a mean, worthleſs turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always ſet up for itſelf,—to know truly what it is in

this reſpect, we muſt know what maſters it ſerves;——they are many, and of various caſts and humours,——and each one lends it ſomething of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I ſuppoſe, may be the cauſe that there is a greater and more whimſical myſtery in the love of money, than in the darkeſt and moſt nonſenſical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the beſt, and when the paſſion ſeems to ſeek ſomething more than its own amuſement,——there is little——very little, I fear, to be ſaid for its humanity.——It may be a ſport to the miſer,——but conſider,——it muſt be death and deſtruction to others.——The moment this ſordid humour begins to govern——farewell all honeſt and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!——how faſt the obligations vaniſh! ſee——he is now ſtripped of all feelings whatever:——the ſhrill cry of juſtice——and the low lamentation of humble diſtreſs, are notes equally beyond his compaſs.——Eternal

God! ſee!—he paſſes by one whom thou haſt juſt bruiſed, without one penſive reflection:——he enters the cabin of the widow whoſe huſband and child thou haſt taken to thyſelf,——exacts his bond, without a ſigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,——let it be by glory,——by ambition,——by ſome generous and manly vice:—if I muſt fall, let it be by ſome paſſion which thou haſt planted in my nature, which ſhall not harden my heart, but leave me room at laſt to retreat and come back to thee!

It would be eaſy here to add the common arguments which reaſon offers againſt this vice; but they are ſo well underſtood, both in matter and form,——it is needleſs.

I might cite to you what Seneca ſays upon it——but the misfortune is, that at the ſame time he was writing againſt riches, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and uſing every means to make that eſtate ſtill greater.

With infinite pleaſure might a preacher enrich his diſcourſe in this place, by

weaving into it all the ſmart things which ancient or modern wits have ſaid upon the love of money:—he might inform you,

" ——That poverty wants ſomething,
" ——that covetouſneſs wanteth all."

" That a miſer can only be ſaid to
" have riches, as a ſick man has a fever,
" which holds and tyrannizes over the
" man——not he over it."

" That covetouſneſs is the ſhirt of the
" ſoul,——the laſt vice it parts with."

" That nature is content with few
" things,——or that nature is never ſa-
" tisfied at all," &c.

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*,——ſpeaks more to the heart,—and the ſingle hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow paſſage he has to go through,——has more coercion in it, than all the ſee-ſaws of philoſophy.

I ſhall endeavour therefore to draw ſuch other reflections from this piece of

ſacred hiſtory, as are applicable to human life,——and more likely to be of uſe.

There is nothing generally in which our happineſs and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourſelves to the world,—and as we govern ourſelves by ſuch judgments, ſo we ſecure our peace and well-being in paſſing through it: the falſe ſteps and miſcarriages in life, iſſuing from a defect in this capital point, are ſo many and fatal, that there can be nothing more inſtructive than an inquiry into the cauſes of this perverſion, which often appears ſo very groſs in us, that were you to take a view of the world,——ſee what notions it entertains, and by what conſiderations it is governed,—you would ſay of the miſtakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions, ——"*That we were wiſe to do evil, but to* "*judge rightly, had no underſtanding.*"

That in many dark and abſtracted queſtions of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould err ——is not ſtrange: we live among myſteries and riddles, and almoſt every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be ſaid to baffle our underſtandings,——yet ſeldom ſo as to miſtake in extremities, and take one contrary for another;—'tis very rare, for inſtance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,—or, that we try the experiment of opium, to keeps us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and meaſures of it. That ſuch wrong determinations in us do not ariſe from any defect of judgment inevitably miſleading us —would reflect diſhonour upon GOD; as if he had made and ſent men into the world on purpoſe to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the inſtances of his ſagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore

in courſe to a ſuppoſition, that, in all inconſiſtent inſtances, there is a ſecret bias, ſomehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aſide from reaſon and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to ſearch for it in ourſelves, we ſhall find it regiſtered in this tranſaction of Felix; and we may depend that in all wrong judgments whatever in ſuch plain caſes as this, that the ſame explanation muſt be given of it which is given in the text, ——namely, that it is ſome ſelfiſh conſideration——ſome ſecret dirty engagement with ſome little appetite, which does us ſo much diſhonour.

The judgments of the more diſintereſted and impartial of us, receive no ſmall tincture from our affections: we generally conſult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in queſtion is not almoſt ſettled before the arbitrator is called into the debate: ——but in the more flagrant inſtances, where the paſſions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to ſee the office to which

reaſon, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; ſerving the lower appetites in the diſhoneſt drudgery of finding out arguments to juſtify the preſent purſuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we ſhould retire a little from the world, to ſee all its pleaſures——and pains too, in their proper ſize and dimenſions;—— this, no doubt, was the reaſon St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his diſcourſe upon the day of judgment, on purpoſe to take the heart off from this world and its pleaſures, which diſhonour the underſtanding ſo as to turn the wiſeſt of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your obſervations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has ſupported thoſe deſperate opinions which have ſo long divided the Chriſtian world——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Conſider popery well; you will be convinced, that the trueſt definition which can be given of it, is,——That it is a pecuniary ſyſtem, well contrived to ope-

rate upon men's paſſions and weakneſs, whilſt their pockets are o'picking: run through all the points of difference between us,—and when you ſee, that in every one of them, they ſerve the ſame end which Felix had in view, either of money or power; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud ariſes which is ſpread over the underſtanding.

If this reaſoning is concluſive with regard to thoſe who merely differ from us in religion,— let us try if it will not hold good with regard to thoſe who have none at all,—or rather who affect to treat all perſuaſions of it, with ridicule alike. Thanks to good ſenſe, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and ſeems to be ſettling at preſent, chiefly amongſt the inferior claſſes of people———where it is likely to reſt: as for the loweſt ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are they not likely to be ſtruck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conſo-

lation; they are too ſerious a ſet of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world to ſay, that this all-ſacred ſyſtem, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the firſt object that the giddy and inconſiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thouſand does it from conviction,——or from arguments which a courſe of ſtudy,——much cool reaſoning,——and a ſober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the queſtion, has furniſhed him with?——The years and way of life of the moſt forward of theſe, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays ſo many reſtraints upon us, is a troubleſome companion to thoſe who will lay no reſtraints upon themſelves;——and for this reaſon there is nothing more common to be obſerved, than that the little arguments and cavils which ſuch men have gathered up againſt

it in the early part of their lives,—how conſiderable ſoever they may have appeared, when viewed through their paſſions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,——yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the purſuit pretty well over,—— and reaſon and judgment have got poſſeſſion of their empire———

——They ſeldom fail of bringing the loſt ſheep back to his fold.

May GOD bring us all there. Amen.

SERMON XX.

The Prodigal Son.

LUKE, XV. 13.

And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.——

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwiſe, that leſſons of wiſdom have never ſuch power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a ſtory which engages the paſſions: Is it that we are like iron, and muſt firſt be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart ſo in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we muſt cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for ſo it is uſually called)——is really

ſuch, or built upon ſome ſtory known at that time in Jeruſalem, is not much to the purpoſe; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the beſt moral account we can.

"A certain man," ſays our SAVIOUR, "had two ſons, and the younger of them "ſaid to his father, Give me the por-"tion of goods which falls to me: and "he divided unto them his ſubſtance. "And not many days after the younger "ſon gathered all together, and took his "journey into a far country, and there "waſted his ſubſtance with riotous "living."

The account is ſhort: the intereſting and pathetic paſſages with which ſuch a tranſaction would be neceſſarily connected, are left to be ſupplied by the heart: ——the ſtory is ſilent——but nature is not:——much kind advice, and many a tender expoſtulation, would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occaſion.

He would diſſuade his ſon from the folly of ſo raſh an enterpriſe, by ſhewing

him the dangers of the journey,——the inexperience of his age,——the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many ſnares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every ſtep,——the pleaſures which would ſolicit him in every luxurious court,—the little knowledge he could gain—except that of evil: he would ſpeak of the ſeductions of women—their charms—— their poiſons:——what hapleſs indulgencies he might give way to, when far from reſtraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The diſſuaſive would but inflame his deſire.——

He gathers all together.——

——I ſee the picture of his departure—the camels and aſſes loaden with his ſubſtance, detached on one ſide of the piece, and already on their way:——the prodigal ſon ſtanding on the fore ground, with a forced ſedateneſs, ſtruggling againſt the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from reſtraint:——

the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:——the father,——ſad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic ſentiment, "that all would not go well with his child,"—approaching to embrace him and bid him adieu.——Poor inconſiderate youth! From whoſe arms art thou flying? From what a ſhelter art thou going forth into the ſtorm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopeſt thou to find a warmer intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea for the extravagancies by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted——the followers of it fled in courſe,——the wants of nature remain,——the hand of GOD gone forth againſt him——"*for when he had ſpent all, a mighty famine aroſe in that country.*"—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and

diſtreſs——ſtray'd out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh,——cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs: the tenſe fibre then relaxes,——the ſoul retires to itſelf,——ſits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a friend, 'tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—Gracious and bountiful GOD! Is it not for this that they who in their proſperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off,—putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,—ſeeſt every careful thought,—heareſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter.——

Strange!—that we ſhould only begin to think of GOD with comfort, when with

joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe.

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unleſs he ſuffers in the fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin*, though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurable on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeem'd to be his firſt hour of wiſdom:——*When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my father have bread enough and to ſpare, whilſt I periſh!*

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or other dying by hunger, is the greateſt, and it is wiſely wove into our frame to awaken man to induſtry, and call forth his talents; and though we ſeem to go on careleſsly, ſporting with it as we do with other terrors,——yet, he

that ſees this enemy fairly, and in his moſt frightly ſhape, will need no long remonſtrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the caſe of the prodigal——he aroſe to go to his father.——

——Alas! How ſhall he tell his ſtory? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he ſhall give in to his father, the ſad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

——The feaſts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the eaſt,—the coſts of Aſiatic rarities,——and of Aſiatic cooks to dreſs them,——the expences of ſinging men and ſinging women,——the flute, the harp, the ſackbut, and of all kinds of muſic—the dreſs of the Perſian courts, how magnificent! their ſlaves how numerous!—their chariots, their horſes, their palaces, their furniture, what immenſe ſums they had devoured!—what expectations from ſtrangers of condition! what exactions!

How ſhall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Da-

maſcus by one of the beſt men in the world;—that he had lent a part of his ſubſtance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had ſwallowed his beſt pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been ſold by a man of honour for twenty ſhekels of ſilver, to a worker in graven images;——that the images he had purchaſed had profited him nothing;—that they could not be tranſported acroſs the wilderneſs, and had been burnt with fire at Shuſan;—that the * apes and peacocks, which he had ſent for from Tharſis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:——that all had gone wrong ſince the day he forſook his father's houſe?

——Leave the ſtory,——it will be told more conciſely.——*When he was yet afar off, his father ſaw him,*—— Compaſſion

* Vide 2 Chronicles, IX. 21.

told it in three words—*he fell upon his neck and kiſſed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it ſo great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child ſtrayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Caſuiſts may ſettle the point as they will: But what could a parent ſee more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—ſmitten with ſtrong ſenſations of pleaſures, and ſuffered to ſally forth unarm'd into the midſt of enemies ſtronger than himſelf?

Generoſity ſorrows as much for the overmatched, as Pity herſelf does.

The idea of a ſon ſo ruin'd, would double the father's careſſes: every effuſion of his tenderneſs would add bitterneſs to his ſon's remorſe.——"Gracious Heaven! what a father have I rendered miſerable!"

And he ſaid, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.

But the father ſaid, Bring forth the beſt robe.———

O ye affections! how fondly do you play at croſs purpoſes with each other! ——'Tis the natural dialogue of true tranſport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itſelf in the offence,——words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of eſteem.

And he ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections ſo kindly break looſe, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taſte it: the cold Stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the muſic, may aſk ſullenly (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuſe to enter: but the humane and compaſſionate all fly impetuouſly to the banquet, given *for a ſon who was dead and is alive again—who was loſt and is found.*

Gentle ſpirits light up the pavilion with a ſacred fire; and parental love and filial piety lead in the maſk with riot and feſtivity!——Was it not for this that GOD gave man muſic to ſtrike upon the kindly paſſions; that Nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governeſs of the feaſt, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladneſs?

The intention of this parable is ſo clear from the occaſion of it, that it will not be neceſſary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was deſigned by way of indirect remonſtrance to the Scribes and Phariſees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR's conduct, for entering ſo freely into conferences with ſinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end he propoſes the parable of the ſhepherd, who left his ninety and nine ſheep that were ſafe in the fold, to go and ſeek for one ſheep that was gone aſtray,—telling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a phyſician,—but they that were ſick: and here, to carry on the ſame

leſſon, and to prove how acceptable ſuch a recovery was to GOD, he relates this account of the prodigal ſon and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a ſubject of much edification to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal ſon, particularly pointed at thoſe who were *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine Grace to repentance; ——and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifeſtly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their converſion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promiſes of GOD.

Theſe uſes have been ſo ably ſet forth, in ſo many good ſermons upon the prodigal ſon, that I ſhall turn aſide from them at preſent, and content myſelf with ſome reflections upon that fatal paſſion which led him,——and ſo many thouſands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curioſity of ſeeing new things, which is the ſame, or

at leaſt a ſiſter paſſion to it,——ſeems wove into the frame of every ſon and daughter of Adam; we uſually ſpeak of it as one of nature's levities, though planted within us for the ſolid purpoſes of carrying forwards the mind to freſh inquiry and knowledge: ſtrip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the preſent page; and we ſhould all of us reſt at eaſe with ſuch objects as preſented themſelves in the pariſh or province where we firſt drew breath.

It is to this ſpur which is ever in our ſides, that we owe the impatience of this deſire for travelling: the paſſion is no way bad,——but as others are,——in its miſmanagement or exceſs;——order it rightly, the advantages are worth the purſuit; the chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and cuſtoms, and underſtand the government and intereſt of other nations,——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more eaſily for converſation and diſcourſe——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nurſery

miſtakes; and by ſhowing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments——by taſting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*——by obſerving the addreſs and arts of men, to conceive what *is ſincere*——and by ſeeing the difference of ſo many various humours and manners——to look into ourſelves and form our own.

This is ſome part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulſe of ſeeing new ſights, augmented with that of getting clear from all leſſons both of wiſdom and reproof at home——carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the ſcene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if ſuch an adventurer, with ſo unpromiſing a ſetting out,—without *carte*,—without compaſs,——be not caſt away for ever,—and may he not be ſaid to eſcape well——if he returns to his country, only as naked as he firſt left it?

But you will ſend an able pilot with your ſon——a ſcholar.——

If wiſdom can ſpeak in no other language but Greek or Latin——you do well——or if mathematics will make a man a gentleman——or natural philoſophy but teach him to make a bow,——he may be of ſome ſervice in introducing your ſon into good ſocieties, and ſupporting him in them when he has done——but the upſhot will be generally this, that in the moſt preſſing occaſions of addreſs ——if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme; he ſhall be eſcorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books—but from his own experience:——a man who has been employed on ſuch ſervices, and thrice made *the tour of Europe, with ſucceſs.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck;——for if he is ſuch as my eyes have ſeen! ſome broken *Swiſs valet de chambre*,—ſome general undertaker, who will perform the journey in ſo many months, "IF GOD PERMIT,"—much knowledge will not accrue;——

ſome profit at leaſt,—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every ſtage from Calais to Rome;——he will be carried to the beſt inns,——inſtructed where there is the beſt wine, and ſup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himſelf.—Look at our governor! I beſeech you:——ſee, he is an inch taller, as he relates the advantages.——

——And here endeth his pride—his knowledge, and his uſe.

But when your ſon gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his ſociety with men of rank and letters, with whom he will paſs the greateſt part of his time.

Let me obſerve, in the firſt place,—that company which is really good, is very rare,——and very ſhy: but you have ſurmounted this difficulty; and procured him the beſt letters of recommendation to the moſt eminent and reſpectable in every capital.

And I anſwer, that he will obtain all by them, which courteſy ſtrictly ſtands obliged to pay on ſuch occaſions, but no more.

There is nothing in which we are ſo much deceived, as in the advantages propoſed from our connexions and diſcourſe with the literati, &c. in foreign parts; eſpecially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or ſtudy.

Converſation is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without ſome ſtock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once: and this is the reaſon,——however it may be boaſted to the contrary, why travellers have ſo little (eſpecially good) converſation with natives,——owing to their ſuſpicion,—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the converſation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their viſits.

The pain on theſe occaſions is uſually reciprocal; the conſequence of which is, that the diſappointed youth ſeeks an eaſier ſociety; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is ſoon finiſhed; and the poor prodigal returns the ſame object of pity, with the prodigal in the Goſpel.

SERMON XXI.

National Mercies conſidered*.

DEUTERONOMY, VI. 20, 21.

And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then ſhalt thou ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moſes left as a ſtanding anſwer for the children of Iſrael to give their poſterity, who in time to come might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies, which GOD had vouchſafed to their forefathers: all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to ſpeak in this manner, each man to his ſon, yet one cannot ſuppoſe, that the direction ſhould be neceſſary for the next generation,—for

* On the Inauguration of his preſent Majeſty.

the children of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of GOD's Providence: it does not ſeem likely that any of them ſhould arrive to that age of reaſoning, which would put them upon aſking the ſuppoſed queſtion, and not be long beforehand inſtructed in the anſwer. Every parent would tell his child the hardſhips of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the ſtory was ſo uncommon,—— ſo full of wonder,—— and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of ſuch tranſport, it could not poſſibly be kept a ſecret:—— the piety and gratitude of one generation would anticipate the curioſity of another; their ſons would learn the ſtory with their language.

This probably might be the caſe with the firſt or ſecond race of people, but in proceſs of time, things might take a different turn: a long and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of their liberties might blunt the ſenſe of thoſe providences of GOD, which had procured them, and ſet the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a diſtance from their hearts. After they

had for ſome years been eaſed of every real burden, an exceſs of freedom might make them reſtleſs under every imaginary one, and amongſt others that of their religion; from thence they might ſeek occaſion to inquire into the foundation and fitneſs of its ceremonies, its ſtatutes, and its judgments.

They might aſk, What meant ſo many commands in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? What policy in ordaining them? and, What obligation could there lie upon reaſonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of ſuch unaccountable injunctions, ſo unworthy the wiſdom of God?

Hereafter, poſſibly, they might go further lengths; and though their natural bent was generally towards ſuperſtition, yet ſome adventurers, as is ever the caſe, might ſteer for the oppoſite coaſt, and as they advanced might diſcover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions ſoever, were alike. That the religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Prieſts and

Levites,—a phantom dreſſed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:——that its rites and ceremonies, and numberleſs injunctions, were ſo many different wheels in the ſame political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuſe the ignorant, and keep them in ſuch a ſtate of darkneſs, as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptionable in itſelf,——yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not ſtand in want of; men had natural reaſon always to have found it out,———and wiſdom to have practiſed it, without Moſes's aſſiſtance.

Nay, poſſibly, in proceſs of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controverſy——when they had given their ſyſtem of infidelity all the ſtrength it could admit of from reaſon, they might begin to embelliſh it with ſome more ſprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Iſraelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free ſcope

and indulgence to this talent: as arguments and ſober reaſoning fail'd, he might turn the edge of his wit againſt types and ſymbols, and treat all the myſteries of his religion, and every thing that could be ſaid upon ſo ſerious a ſubject, with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleaſantry upon many ſacred paſſages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen ſerpent, with great courage,——and confound himſelf in the diſtinctions of clean and unclean beaſts, by the deſperate ſallies of his wit againſt them.

He could but poſſibly take one ſtep further: when the land which flowed with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impreſſions of his yoke, and bleſſings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious concluſion, that there was no Being who was the author and beſtower of them,——but that it was their own arm, and the mightineſs of Iſraelitiſh ſtrength, which had put them, and kept them, in poſſeſſion of ſo much happineſs.—

O Moſes! How would thy meek and patient ſpirit have been put to the torture

by ſuch a return? If a propenſity towards ſuperſtition in the Iſraelites, did once betray thee into an exceſs of anger, that thou threweſt the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and careleſsly hazarded'ſt the whole treaſure of the world,——with what indignation and honeſt anguiſh would'ſt thou have heard the ſcoffings of thoſe who denied the hand which brought them forth, and ſaid, Who is God, that we ſhould obey his voice? With what force and vivacity would'ſt thou have reproached them with the hiſtory of their own nation:——that if too free an enjoyment of God's bleſſings, had made them forget to look backwards,——it was neceſſary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, without proſpect of deliverance: that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a ſucceſſion of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one ſtruggle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeleſs period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were ſnatched, almoſt againſt their own

wills, out of the hands of their oppreſſors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the poſſeſſion of a land of plenty: that this change in their affairs was not the produce of chance or fortune,—or was it projected or executed by any atchievement or plan of human device, which might ſoon again be defeated by ſuperior ſtrength or policy from without, or from force of accidents from within, from change of circumſtances, humours, and paſſions of men, all which generally had a ſway in the riſe and fall of kingdoms,——but that all was brought about by the power and goodneſs of GOD, who ſaw and pitied the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.

That ſince that miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes not to be accounted for by ſecond cauſes, and the natural courſe of events, had demonſtrated not only GOD's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them——that nations greater and mightier than they, were driven out be-

fore them, and their lands given to them for an everlaſting poſſeſſion.——

This was what they ſhould teach their children, and their children's children after them.——Happy generations, for whom ſo joyful a leſſon was prepared! happy indeed! had ye at all times known to have made the uſe of it, which Moſes continually exhorted,——*of drawing nigh unto God with all your hearts, who had been ſo nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as it reſpects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourſelves: the preſent occaſion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated bleſſing vouchſafed to us, ſince we became a nation, making it hard to deſiſt from ſuch an application.

I begin with the firſt in order of time, as well as the greateſt of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkneſs and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Chriſtianity brought with it into Britain, ſo early as in the life-time

of the apoſtles themſelves, or at furtheſt, not many years after their death.

Though this might ſeem a bleſſing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in reſpect of Judea,——its ſituation and inacceſſibleneſs as an iſland,—the little that was then known of navigation,——or carried on of commerce,——the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of CHRIST, and almoſt in the neighbourhood of where the firſt glad tidings of him were ſounded——one cannot but adore the goodneſs of God, and remark a more particular providence in its conveyance and eſtabliſhment here, than amongſt other nations upon the continent,——where, though the oppoſitions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not theſe natural impediments to encounter.

Hiſtorians and ſtateſmen, who generally ſearch every where for the cauſes of events but in the pleaſure of Him who diſpoſes of

them, may make different reflections upon this. They may consider it as a matter incidental, brought to pass by the fortuitous ambition, success, and settlement of the Romans here; it appearing that in Claudius's reign, when Christianity began to get footing in Rome, near eighty thousand of that city and people were fixed in this island: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the gospel was in course open, and its transition from the one to the other, natural and easy to be accounted for,——and yet, nevertheless, providential. God often suffers us to pursue the devices of our hearts, whilst he turns the course of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purposes. Thus, he might make that pursuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and establish it here: he might make the wickedness of the earth to work his own righteousness, by suffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purposes were fulfilled, and *then put his hook into their nos-*

trils, and lead thoſe wild beaſts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this bleſſing of the light of the Goſpel, we muſt not forget that by which it was preſerved from the danger of being totally ſmothered and extinguiſhed, by that vaſt ſwarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and ſhook the world like a tempeſt; changing names and cuſtoms, and language and government, and almoſt the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That our religion ſhould be preſerved at all, when every thing elſe ſeemed to periſh, which was capable of change,—or, that it ſhould not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and ſtrength,——the whole can be aſcribed to no cauſe ſo likely as this, That the ſame power of God which ſent it forth, was preſent to ſupport it——when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preſerving Chriſtianity from an utter extinction——we muſt reckon that of being enabled to preſerve, and free it from cor-

ruptions, which the ruſt of time,—— the abuſes of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are truſted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was begun, by how many ſtrange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not *entirely without ſpot or wrinkle*,——at leaſt, without great blotches or marks of anility!

Even the blow which was ſuffered to fall upon it ſhortly after, in that period where our hiſtory looks ſo unlike herſelf, ſtain'd, Mary, by thee, and disfigured with blood:——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of GOD, which ſo ſpeedily ſnatched the ſword of perſecution out of her hand,—making her reign as ſhort as it was mercileſs.

If GOD then made us, as he did the Iſraelites, ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more ſignal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in thoſe good days which followed, when a long and a wiſe reign was as neceſſary to

build up our church, as a ſhort one was before to ſave it from ruins.——

——The bleſſing was neceſſary,—and it was granted.——

God having multiplied the years of that renowned princeſs to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering perſecuted people, and ſettle them upon ſuch foundation as muſt make them happy;——the touch-ſtone, by which they are to be tried, whom God has entruſted with the care of kingdoms.

Bleſſed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that teſt ſo much eaſier for the Britiſh, than other princes of this earth; whoſe ſubjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have ſeldom happened upon that of changing their miſery, and, it is to be feared, are never likely, ſo long as they are kept ſo ſtrongly bound in chains of darkneſs,—and chains of power.

From both theſe kinds of evils, which are almoſt naturally connected together, How providential was our eſcape in the ſucceeding reign, when all the choice

blood was beſpoke, and preparations made to offer it up at one ſacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected feſtival, with the glories of this: or name the ſorrows of the next reign, which ended in the ſubverſion of our conſtitution, was it not neceſſary to purſue the thread of our deliverances through thoſe times, and remark how nigh GOD's providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as ſignal a manner as he reſtored us from the other.

Indeed the latter of them might have been a joyleſs matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a bleſſing by a ſucceeding eſcape, which ſealed and conveyed it ſafe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue ſenſe of former bleſſings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—we were ſuffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if GOD had not raiſed up a deliverer to lead us back,——all had been loſt:——the arts of Jeſuitry had decoyed

us forwards, or if that had failed, we had been push'd down by open force, and our destruction had been inevitable.

The good consequences of that deliverance are such, that it seemed as if God had suffered our waters, like those of Bethesda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; since to the account of that day's blessing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing since, worth a freeman's living for,——the revival of our liberty, our religion, the just rights of our kings,——and the just rights of our people, and along with all, that happy provision for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beseech you, in the way which becomes wise men, by pursuing the intentions of his blessings, and making a better use of them than our forefathers, who sometimes seem'd to grow weary of their own happiness:—— let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to prosper in it, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein,——

and when our silver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the instances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty GOD, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may, in the last day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days set apart to celebrate successful occurrences, unless they influence a nation's morals:——a sinful people can never be grateful to GOD,——nor can they, properly speaking, be loyal to their prince;—they cannot be grateful to the one, because they live not under a sense of his mercies,——nor can they be loyal to the other, because they disengage the Providence of GOD from taking his part——and then giving a heart to his adversaries to be intractable.—

And therefore, what was said by some one, That every sin was a treason against the soul, may be applied here,——That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and his country. And, whatever statesmen may write of the causes of the rise

and fall of nations;—for the contrary reasons, a good man will ever be found to be the beſt patriot and the beſt ſubject: and though an individual may ſay, What can my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men? it may be anſwered, That if it ſhould fail of a bleſſing here,——it will have one advantage at leaſt, which is this,

It will ſave thy own ſoul; which may GOD grant. Amen.

and fall of nations:—for the contrary reasons, a good man will ever be found to be the best patriot and the best subject: and though an individual may say, What can my righteousness profit a nation of men? it may be answered, That if it should fail of a blessing here,——it will have one advantage at least, which is this,

It will save thy own soul; which may God grant. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

The Hiſtory of Jacob conſidered.

GENESIS, XLVII. 9.

And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.——

THERE is not a man in hiſtory, whom I pity more than the man who made this reply,——not becauſe his days were ſhort,——but that they were long enough to have crowded into them ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy: for, 'bating the ſeven years he ſerved Laban for Rachael, "*which ſeemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her*,"——ſtrike thoſe out of the number,——all his other days were ſorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what

man is born to, comes, you'll ſay, from the ſame quarter: 'tis true; but ſtill, in ſome men's lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery:—— one evil ſo riſes out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe, from his firſt ſetting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of ſuch different ſcenes: he was told, by Iſaac his father, that *God ſhould bleſs him with the dew of heaven, and the fatneſs of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine;——that people were to ſerve him, and nations to bow down to him;——that he ſhould be lord over his brethren;——that bleſſed was every one that bleſſed him, and curſed was every one who curſed him.*

The ſimplicity of youth takes promiſes of happineſs in the fulleſt latitude,—— and as theſe were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,——it would leave no diſtruſt of their accompliſhment upon his

mind;——every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing;——he would purſue it,——he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great meaſure ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth: for in fact, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,——Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy man, that in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and

an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectations, we find from his own pathetic remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven days journey, and overtook him on Mount Gilead.——I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

Theſe twenty years that I have been with thee,——thy ewes have not caſt their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts I brought not unto thee,——I bare the loſs of it; what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen by night, of my hands didſt thou require it. Thus I was: in the day the drought conſumed me, and the froſt by night, and my ſleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy houſe:——I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle; and thou haſt changed my wages ten times.

Scarce had he recovered from theſe evils, when the ill conduct and vices of

his children wound his ſoul to death.—— Reuben proves inceſtuous,—Judah adulterous,—his daughter Dinah is diſhonoured,——Simeon and Levi diſhonour themſelves by treachery,——two of his grandchildren are ſtricken with ſudden death,—Rachael his beloved wife periſhes, and in circumſtances which imbitter'd his loſs,——his ſon Joſeph, a moſt promiſing youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren; and, to cloſe all, himſelf driven by famine in his old age to die amongſt the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch! well might he ſay, *That few and evil had been his days:* the anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's inquiry, which was ſimply his age:—— but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them? all that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a ſhattered fortune—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them ourſelves, paſs naturally enough into the habit, and by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity: but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,——the avarice of a parent——the unkindneſs of a relation,——the ingratitude of a child,——they are evils which leave a ſcar;——beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any;——every looker-on has an intereſt in the tragedy;——but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe, than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon further:——in a word—we realize nothing:——we ſigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,——parental partiality,——or parental injuſtice,——it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed——'tis that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt: and an eternal terror with it, in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of them both in one day,——and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained—there will daggers ever be planted; *the ſon ſhall* literally *be ſet at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, and the daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in-law,—and a man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſehold.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtic policy, as of equity, which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the

firſt-born ſon be hers that was hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh his ſons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the ſon of the beloved, firſt born, before the ſon of the hated which is indeed the firſt born, ——but he ſhall acknowledge the ſon of the hated for firſt born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced againſt——for 'tis one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;——but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike,——and, why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad. ——What will it do then to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itſelf neglected,——too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain?——ſee, it ſits down in ſilence, robbed by diſcouragements, of all its natural powers to pleaſe,—born to ſee others loaded with

careſſes——in ſome uncheery corner it nouriſhes its diſcontent,——and with a weight upon its ſpirits, which its little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand, —— it droops, and pines away.——Sad Victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him: ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrow ſufficient on that ſcore, to have taken warning: and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhewn to him in hers,——*for Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his children; becauſe he was the ſon of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.*——O Iſrael! where was that prophetic ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?——Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of*

many colours, ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes?——and, Why is every thing?——but that it pleaſes Heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of its recompence,——

——Grant me, gracious GOD! to go cheerfully on the road which thou haſt marked out;——I wiſh it neither more wide nor more ſmooth:——continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:——I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt track I can with it——and having done that, I will truſt myſelf and the iſſue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy,——and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life——The impoſition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargain'd for or loved.—— *And it came to paſs in the morning, behold it was Leah! and he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that thou haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve*

thee for Rachael? Wherefore then haſt thou beguiled me?

This, indeed, is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,——but the moral of it is ſtill good: and the abuſe with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as art and artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage:——collect all their complaints:——hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—"They were miſtaken in the perſon."—Some diſguiſe either of body or mind is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtic ſcuffle;——ſome fair ornament——perhaps the very one which won the heart——*the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit*, falls off;——*It is not the Rachael for whom I have ſerved*,——*Why haſt thou then beguiled me?*

Be open——be honeſt: give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing——varniſh nothing,——and if theſe fair weapons will not do,——better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day;

——when the night is paſſed, 'twill ever be the ſame ſtory,——*And it came to paſs, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of fleſh and blood:——when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether 'tis Rachael or Leah,—— be the object what it will, as it muſt be on the earthly ſide, at leaſt, of perfection, —it will fall ſhort of the work of fancy, whoſe exiſtence is in the clouds.

In ſuch caſes of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his,—*What is it thou haſt done unto me?*——for 'tis his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiſcretion of his own paſſions.

I know not whether 'tis of any uſe to take notice of this ſingularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another: *Art thou my very ſon*

Esau? and he said, I am. 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the same test, but both suffered from a similitude of stratagem; and 'tis hard to say, whether the anguish, from cross'd love, in the breast of one brother, might not be as sore a punishment, as the disquietudes of cross'd ambition and revenge in the breast of the other.

I do not see which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,——or, why a man should fall into that very pit (and no other), which he has *graven and digged for another man:* time and chance may bring such incidents about, and there wants nothing, but that Jacob should have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for such a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the best way to escape evil, is, in general, not to commit it ourselves——and that whenever the passions of mankind will order it otherwise, to rob those, at least, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out,———*That our travail has returned*

upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.

I cannot conclude this discourse, without returning first to the part with which it set out;——the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the shortness and misery of his days:——give me leave to bring this home to us, by a single reflection upon each.

There is something strange in it that life should appear so short *in the gross*—— and yet so long *in the detail.* Misery may make it so, you'll say—but we will exclude it,——and still you'll find, though we all complain of the shortness of life, what numbers there are who seem quite overstocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the highways and streets of the city, to compel guests to come in, and take it off their hands: to do this with ingenuity and forecast, is not one of the least arts and business of life itself; and they who cannot succeed in it, carry as many marks of distress about them, as bankruptcy herself could wear. Be as careless as we

may, we ſhall not always have the power, ——nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cool'd, and the ſpirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;——then wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard,—afflictions or a bed of ſickneſs will find their hours of perſuaſion,——and, ſhould they fail, there is ſomething yet behind,—— old age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its trembling hand hold up the glaſs to us, as it did to the patriarch.——

——Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians! wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now:——look back, behold this fair ſpace capable of ſuch heavenly improvements——all ſcrawl'd over and defaced with——I want words to ſay, with what——for I think only of the reflections with which you are to ſupport yourſelves, in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away, ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the

work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage——ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again.—— We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable; and yet the world looks happy enough——and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings, and ſeems rather to be giving a ſtory of his ſufferings, than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the GOD of Love. Look upon the world he has given us, ——obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the temperate,——but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almoſt a paradiſe, planted when Nature was in her gayeſt humour.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the globe,——and this repreſentation another:——truth lieth betwixt —or rather, good and evil are mixed up

together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry;——but, I truſt—it is the good:——firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe, that a work intended to exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increaſe the complaint,——or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuits' college of Granado gave of their *Sanchez*,——That though he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die than eat ſalt or pepper, or aught that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men, whoſe natural pleaſures are burdens, and who fly from joy (as theſe ſplenetic and moroſe ſouls do), as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis ſorrow and heavineſs of heart.——The loſs of goods,——of health,——of coronets

and mitres, are only evil, as they occaſion ſorrow;——take that out——the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enow——but he muſt fill up the meaſure with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,——but diſquiet himſelf in vain too.

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,——the beſt we can do in it, is to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character, which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities——when they find they cannot conquer them,——they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If therefore we muſt be a ſolicitous race of ſelf-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us ſo,—and for GOD's ſake be ſolicitous only to live well.

SERMON XXXIII.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus conſidered.

LUKE, XVI. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the deſign of which was, to ſhew us the neceſſity of conducting ourſelves, by ſuch lights as GOD had been pleaſed to give us: the ſenſe and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being this, That they who will not be perſuaded to anſwer the great purpoſes of their being, upon ſuch arguments as are offered to them in Scripture, will never be perſuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary ſoever;—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will*

they be perſuaded though one ſhould riſe from the dead.——

——Riſe from the dead! To what purpoſe? What could ſuch a meſſenger propoſe or urge, which had not been propoſed and urged already? The novelty or ſurpriſe of ſuch a viſit might awaken the attention of a curious unthinking people, who ſpent their time in nothing elſe, but to hear and tell ſome new thing; but ere the wonder was well over, ſome new wonder would ſtart up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a ſoul make one inquiry about him.

——This, I fear, would be the concluſion of the affair. But to bring this matter ſtill cloſer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that God, in compliance with a curious world,—— or from a better motive,——in compaſſion to a ſinful one, ſhould vouchſafe to ſend one from the dead, to call home our conſcience and make us better Chriſtians, better citizens, better men, and better ſervants to God than what we are.

Now bear with me, I beſeech you, in framing ſuch an addreſs, as, I imagine, would be moſt likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to ſay: the great channel to it is Intereſt,—— and there he would ſet out.

He might tell us (after the moſt indiſputable credentials of whom he ſerved), That he was come a meſſenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated propoſals, whereby much was to be granted us on his ſide,——and ſomething to be parted with on ours: but that, not to alarm us,——'twas neither houſes, nor land, nor poſſeſſions;—'twas neither wives, or children, or brethren, or ſiſters, which we had to forſake;——no one rational pleaſure to be given up;——no natural endearment to be torn from——

——In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with——but what was not for our intereſts to keep——and that was our Vices; which brought death and miſery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thouſand arguments, that to be temperate and chaſte, and juſt and peaceable, and

charitable and kind to one another—— was only doing that for CHRIST's ſake, which was moſt for our own; and that were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would ſubmit to his government,——he would convince us, 'twould be impoſſible for the wit of man to frame any propoſals more for our preſent intereſts, than *to lead an uncorrupted life—— to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature, and the refinement of human happineſs.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from intereſt got over,—— the ſpectre might addreſs himſelf to the other paſſions——In doing this he could but give us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of God,——or could he do more than impreſs the moſt awful ones, of his majeſty and power:—— he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening to the place from whence we ſhall not return;——that during our ſtay we ſtood accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercies,

——yet was terrible in his judgments;
——that he took notice of all our actions
——that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and ſpied out all our ways; and was ſo pure in his nature, that he would puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had appointed a day, wherein he would enter into this inquiry.——

He might add ——

But what?——with all the eloquence of an inſpired tongue, What could he add or ſay to us, which has not been ſaid before? The experiment has been tried a thouſand times upon the hopes and fears, the reaſons and paſſions of men, by all the powers of nature —— the applications of which have been ſo great, and the variety of addreſſes ſo unanſwerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that ſo good a religion ſhould be no better recommended by its profeſſors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced,—and ſo long as the pre-engagement with our paſſions ſubſiſts, it is not argumentation which can

do the buſineſs;—we may amuſe our-ſelves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reaſon not with the proper faculty, when we ſee every thing in the ſhape and colouring, in which the treachery of the ſenſes paints it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and obſerve how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,——one would think, at firſt ſight, they believed, that all diſcourſes of religion and virtue were mere matters of ſpeculation, for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we ſeemed to be agreed in no one thing, but ſpeaking well, —and acting ill. But the trueſt comment is in the text, —*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets*, &c.

If they are not brought over to the intereſts of religion upon ſuch diſcoveries as GOD has made——or has enabled them to make, they will ſtand out againſt all evidence:——in vain ſhall *one* riſe for their conviction;——was the earth to give up her dead—'twould be the ſame;—— every man would return again to his

courſe, and the ſame bad paſſions would produce the ſame bad actions to the end of the world.

This is the principal leſſon of the parable; but I muſt enlarge upon the whole of it——becauſe it has ſome other uſeful leſſons, and they will beſt preſent themſelves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the moſt remarkable in the Goſpel, our SAVIOUR repreſents a ſcene, in which, by a kind of contraſt, two of the moſt oppoſite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are paſs'd before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the higheſt pinnacle of proſperity,——to riches——to happineſs ——I ſay, *happineſs*,——in compliance with the world, and on a ſuppoſition, that the poſſeſſion of riches muſt make us happy, when the very purſuit of them ſo warms our imagination, that we ſtake both body and ſoul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchaſed at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wiſdom,——as well as of folly.——

Whatever was the caſe here, is beyond the purport of the parable——the Scripture is ſilent, and ſo ſhould we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:——to gratify the one, he was clothed in purple and fine linen: to ſatisfy the other,——fared ſumptuouſly every day;——and upon every thing too——we'll ſuppoſe, that climates could furniſh——that luxury could invent, or the hand of ſcience could torture.

Cloſe by his gates is repreſented an object whom Providence might ſeem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and ſhew him to what wretchedneſs his condition might be brought: a creature in all the ſhipwreck of nature,——helpleſs,——undone,——in want of friends, in want of health,——and in want of every thing with them which his diſtreſſes called for.

In this ſtate he is deſcribed as deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and though the caſe is not expreſsly put, that he was refuſed,

yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the hiſtorical part of the parable,——or pleaded after by the other, that he ſhewed mercy to the miſerable, we may conclude his requeſt was unſucceſsful——like too many others in the world, either ſo high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down diſtinctly enough upon the ſufferings of their fellow-creatures,——or by long ſurfeiting in a continual courſe of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is ſuch a diſtemper as hunger, in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thouſand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhoſpitable world, the poor man ſinks ſilently under his burden.—But, good GOD! whence is this? Why doſt thou ſuffer theſe hardſhips in a world which thou haſt made? Is it for thy honour, that one man ſhould eat the bread of fulneſs, and ſo many of his own ſtock and lineage eat the bread of ſorrow?——That this man ſhould go clad in purple, and have all his paths ſtrewed with roſebuds of delight, whilſt ſo many mournful paſſengers go heavily along, and paſs

by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy glory, O GOD! that ſo large a ſhade of miſery ſhould be ſpread acroſs thy works:——or, is it that we ſee but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is ſeen;——when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the diſtreſsful incidents of this drama ſhall be unravell'd;——when every man's caſe ſhall be reconſidered,——then wilt thou be fully juſtified in all thy ways, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped.

After a long day of mercy miſpent in riot and uncharitableneſs, the rich man *died alſo*:——the parable adds,—and was buried:——Buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to proſtitute upon thoſe occaſions.

But this was the laſt vain ſhow; the utter concluſion of all his epicurean grandeur;——the next is a ſcene of horror, where he is repreſented by our SAVIOUR, in a ſtate of the utmoſt miſery, from

whence he is ſuppoſed to lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveds't thy good things.

———That he had received his good things,——'twas from heaven,——and could be no reproach: with what ſeverity ſoever the Scripture ſpeaks againſt riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring ſumptuouſly every day, was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it is a real part of a vicious character: the caſe might be then as now: his quality and ſtation in the world might be ſuppoſed to be ſuch, as not only to have juſtified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of ſtations there muſt be in the world, which muſt be ſupported by ſuch marks of diſtinction as cuſtom impoſes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is deſcribed to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the paſtures, and a hundred ſheep,

beſides harts and roe-bucks, and fallow deer and fatted fowl, with thirty meaſures of fine flour, and threeſcore meaſures of meal, for the daily proviſion of his table;——all this is not laid to him as a ſin, but rather remarked as an inſtance of GOD's bleſſing to him;——and whenever theſe things are otherwiſe, 'tis from a waſteful and diſhoneſt perverſion of them to pernicious ends,——and oft-times, to the very oppoſite ones for which they were granted,——to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.——

And this ſeems to have been the ſnare the rich man had fallen into—and poſſibly, had he fared leſs ſumptuouſly,——he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better diſpoſed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compaſſion for it.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveds't thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things.——Remember! ſad ſubject of recollection! that a man has paſſed through this world with all the bleſſings and advantages of it, on his ſide,——favoured by

God Almighty with riches——befriended by his fellow-creatures in the means of acquiring them,——assisted every hour by the society of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them—to remember, how much he has received,——how little he has bestowed,——that he has been no man's friend,—no one's protector,——no one's benefactor,——blessed God!

Thus begging in vain for himself, he is represented at last as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be sent to them to give them warning, and save them from the ruin which he had fallen into;——*They have Moses and the prophets*, was the answer of the patriarch,——*let them hear them*; but the unhappy man is represented, as discontented with it; and still persisting in his request, and urging, —*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

——He thought so——but Abraham knew otherwise:——And the grounds of the determination I have explained already,——so shall proceed to draw some other conclusions and lessons from the parable.

And first, our SAVIOUR might further intend to discover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expose mankind, agreeably to what is elsewhere declared, how hardly shall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a blessing for GOD to trust us with, or we to manage: they surround us at all times with ease, with nonsense, with flattery and false friends, with which thousands and ten thousands have perished: —— they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherously to conceal them from us; ——they hourly administer to our temptations; ——and neither allow us time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them:—nay, what is strange, do they not often tempt men even to covetousness? and though amidst all the ill offices which riches do us, one would least suspect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other; yet so it is, that many a man contracts his spirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is leſs need to preach againſt this: we ſeem all to be haſtening to the oppoſite extreme of luxury and expence: we generally content ourſelves with the ſolution of it; and ſay, 'Tis a natural conſequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a miſtake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cauſe of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads ſo many thouſands on with an affectation of poſſeſſing more than they have,——and conſequently of engaging in a ſyſtem of expences they cannot ſupport.

In one word, 'tis the neceſſity of *appearing* to be ſomebody, in order to be ſo—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another leſſon in the parable, concerning the true uſe and application of riches; we may be ſure from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ thoſe talents as GOD intended.——

How GOD did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inſcription you ſhall read there——as from any chapter and verſe I might cite upon the ſubject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors, turn our eyes that way, and conſider the traces which even the moſt inſenſible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive ſpringing up within him from ſome caſual act of generoſity; and though this is a pleaſure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;——let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight ariſing in the mind from the conſcience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we muſt call upon the compaſſionate——Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleaſure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleaſures, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment of it requires ſome qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does:—there muſt be ſomething

antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper which will render that good——a good to that individual; otherwiſe, though 'tis true it may be poſſeſſed,——yet it never can be enjoyed.

Conſider how difficult you will find it to convince a miſerly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable; or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleaſant.

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modell'd both mind and body to no other happineſs but good eating and drinking,——bid him *taſte and ſee how good God is*:——there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind muſt be like your propoſition, before it can be reliſhed; and 'tis the reſemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your ſide.

'Tis therefore not to the cruel,——'tis to the merciful;——to thoſe who rejoice with thoſe that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,——that we make this

appeal:——'tis to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the ſad* ſtory of the fatherleſs, and of him who hath no helper, and beſpeak your almſgiving in behalf of thoſe, who know not how to aſk for it themſelves.

——What can I ſay more?——it is a ſubject on which I cannot inform your judgment,——and in ſuch an audience, I would not preſume to practiſe upon your paſſions: let it ſuffice to ſay, that they whom GOD hath bleſſed with the means, ——and for whom he has done more, in bleſſing them likewiſe with a diſpoſition,—have abundant reaſon to be thankful to him, as the author of every good gift, for the meaſure he hath beſtowed to them for both: 'tis the refuge againſt the ſtormy wind and tempeſt, which he has planted in our hearts; and the conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, forces all the ſons and daughters of Adam to ſeek ſhelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and ſettlements as we will, the moſt affluent plenty may be ſtripp'd, and

* Charity Sermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

find all its worldly comforts like ſo many withered leaves dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be ſhaken; and the greateſt that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one,—— may happen to every man: and therefore that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing elſe, ſhould govern us;——*That whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo unto them.*

Haſt thou ever laid upon the bed of languiſhing, or laboured under a diſtemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy ſorrowful and penſive ſpirit at that time, and ſay, What it was that made the thoughts of death ſo bitter:—if thou haſt children,—— I affirm it the bitterneſs of death lay there!——if unbrought up, and unprovided for, What will become of them? Where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will ſtand up for them, and plead their cauſe againſt the wicked?

——Bleſſed GOD! to thee, who art a father to the fatherleſs, and a huſband to the widow,—I intruſt them.

Haſt thou ever ſuſtained any conſiderable ſhock in thy fortune? or, Has the ſcantineſs of thy condition hurried thee into great ſtraits, and brought thee almoſt to diſtraction? Conſider what was it that ſpread a table in that wilderneſs of thought,——who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of conſolation who ſtepped in,——ſaw thee embarraſſed with tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,——took them under his protection?——Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!——and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehenſions of a parent's love.

——Haſt thou——

——But how ſhall I aſk a queſtion which muſt bring tears into ſo many eyes? —Haſt thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner ſtill, by the loſs of a moſt obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child by the ſtroke of death?

——bitter remembrance! nature droops at it—but nature is the ſame in all conditions and lots of life.——A child thruſt forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of inſtruction, and the means of its ſalvation, is a ſubject of more tender heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature:——as we have felt for ourſelves,—let us feel for CHRIST ſake—let us feel for theirs: and may the GOD of all comfort bleſs you. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

Pride.

LUKE, XIV. 10, 11.

But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bad thee cometh, he may ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee; for whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR's to Humility, addreſſed by way of inference from what he had ſaid in the three foregoing verſes of the chapter; where, upon entering into the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees to eat bread, and marking how ſmall a portion of this neceſſary virtue entered in with the ſeveral gueſts, diſcovering itſelf from their chooſing the chief rooms, and moſt diſtinguiſhed places of honour;—he takes the occaſion which ſuch a behaviour offered, to

caution them againſt Pride;—ſtates the inconvenience of the paſſion;——ſhews the diſappointments which attend it;—— the diſgrace in which it generally ends; in being forced at laſt to recede from the pretenſions to what is more than our due; which, by the way, is the very thing the paſſion is eternally prompting us to expect. When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, ſays our SAVIOUR, ſit not down in the higheſt room, leſt a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bad thee and him, come and ſay to thee,——Give this man place: and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room.

——But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room:—— hard lecture!——In the loweſt room?——What,—do I owe nothing to myſelf? Muſt I forget my ſtation, my character in life? Reſign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in poſſeſſion of;——give all up! and ſuffer inferiors to take my honours? Yes;——for that, ſays our SAVIOUR, is the road to it: *For when he that*

bad thee cometh, he will ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them that ſit at meat with thee:—for whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not neceſſary we ſhould look beyond this life, and ſay, That in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing ſhall be brought low, and every irregular paſſion dealt with as it deſerves;——that pride, amongſt the reſt (conſidered as a vicious character), ſhall meet with its proper puniſhment of being abaſed, and lying down for ever in ſhame and diſhonour.——It is not neceſſary we ſhould look ſo far forwards for the accompliſhment of this: the words ſeem not ſo much to imply the threat of a diſtant puniſhment, the execution of which was to be reſpited to that day;——as the declaration of a plain truth depending upon the natural courſe of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world; from whence, as well as from our reaſoning upon the

point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to so many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature rests secure from,——that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of men's passions; which, though very bad executioners in general, yet are so far just ones in this, that they seldom suffer the exultations of an insolent temper to escape the abasement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deserve.

In other vicious excesses which a man commits, the world (though it is not much to its credit) seems to stand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greatest enemy to yourself,——or if an enemy to the public, at least, you are so remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himself immediately concerned in your punishment: but in the instances of Pride, the attack is personal: for as this passion can only take its rise from a secret comparison, which the party has been making of himself to my disadvantage,

every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is so far a direct injury, either as it withholds the respect which is my due,——or perhaps denies me to have any; or else, which presses equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: in every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it,——if it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean estimation, and possibly a very unfair one, of the like pretensions in myself,——the attack, I say, is personal; and has generally the fate to be felt and resented as such.

So that with regard to the present inconveniences, there is scarce any vice, bating such as are immediately punished by laws, which a man may not indulge with more safety to himself, than this one of Pride;——the humblest of men not being so entirely void of the passion them-

ſelves, but that they ſuffer ſo much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accompliſhment of the text a common intereſt and concern: in which they are generally ſucceſsful,—the nature of the vice being ſuch, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occaſions itſelf of its own humiliation.

The proud man,——ſee!——he is ſore all over; touch him——you put him to pain: and though of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all ſenſe and feeling, yet is poſſeſſed with ſo nice and exquiſite a one himſelf, that the ſlights, the little neglects and inſtances of diſeſteem, which would be ſcarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man was it only for this, that it ſhould not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chaſtiſe me;——my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at leaſt will not incommode me:——ſo little diſcountenance do I ſee given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I ſuffer by

them:——but here——if I exalt myſelf, I have no proſpect of eſcaping;——with this vice I ſtand ſwoln up in every body's way, and muſt unavoidably be thruſt back: whichever way I turn, whatever ſtep I take under the direction of this paſſion, I preſs unkindly upon ſome one, and in return, muſt prepare myſelf for ſuch mortifying repulſes, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way ſorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whoſe obſervation upon it was the ſame,——and it will ever hold good, *that before honour was humility, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall——Put not therefore thyſelf forth in the preſence of the king, and ſtand not in the place of great men:——for better is it*——(which by the way is the very diſſuaſive in the text)——*better is it, that it be ſaid unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou ſhouldeſt be put lower in the preſence of the prince whom thine eyes have ſeen.*

Thus much for the illuſtration of this one argument of our SAVIOUR's, againſt

Pride:——there are many other conſiderations which expoſe the weakneſs of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have ſuggeſted; but as the particular occaſion which gave riſe to this lecture of our SAVIOUR's againſt Pride naturally led him to ſpeak of the mortifications which attend ſuch inſtances of it, as he then beheld:——for this reaſon the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a ſet diſcourſe would be doing injuſtice to the ſubject. I ſhall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer ſome other conſiderations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this ſubject, as ſo many inducements to check this weak paſſion in man; which, though one of the moſt convenient of his infirmities,—the moſt painful and diſcourteous to ſociety, yet, by a ſad fatality, ſo it is, that there are few vices except ſuch whoſe temptations are immediately ſeated in our natures, to which there is ſo general a propenſity throughout the whole race.

This had led ſome ſatirical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom

were proud alike;——that one man differed from another, not ſo much in the different portions which he poſſeſſed of it, as in the different art and addreſs by which he excels in the management and diſguiſe of it to the world: we trample, no doubt, too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole the remark has more ſpleen than truth in it; there being thouſands (if any evidence is to be allowed) of the moſt unaffected humility, and trueſt poverty of ſpirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithſtanding this, ſo much may be allowed to the obſervation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in ſociety ſo inſenſibly;——ſteals in unobſerved upon the heart upon ſo many occaſions;—forms itſelf upon ſuch ſtrange pretenſions, and when it has done, veils itſelf under ſuch a variety of unſuſpected appearances,—ſometimes even under that of Humility itſelf;—in all which caſes, Self-love, like a falſe friend, inſtead of checking, moſt treacherouſly feeds this humour,——points out ſome excellence in every ſoul to make him vain, and think

more highly of himself, than he ought to think;——that, upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betray'd——or which requires greater helps of good sense and good principles to guard against.

And first, the root from which it springs is no inconsiderable discredit to the fruit.

If you look into the best moral writers, who have taken pains to search into the grounds of this passion,——they will tell you, that Pride is the vice of little and contracted souls;—that whatever affectation of greatness it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanness in the heart of it:——a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge;——like *poor* relations, they look a little shy at one another at first sight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the same stem; and there is scarce any one who has not seen many such instances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable stroke he has given of this affinity, in his description of a *Pride which licks the dust.*

As it has *meanneſs* at the bottom of it, —ſo it is juſtly charged with having *weakneſs* there too, of which it gives the ſtrongeſt proof in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment,——What is it the proud man aims at?——why,—ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference, as is due to his ſuperior merit, &c. &c.

Now, good ſenſe and a knowledge of the world ſhew us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation,—— they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted upon: Honour and Reſpect muſt be a *Free-will offering:* treat them otherwiſe, and claim them from the world as a tax,——they are ſure to be withheld; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of its weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy

upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no leſs a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion——in ſober truth, 'tis but a ſcurvy kind of a trick *(quoties voluit Fortuna jocari)*—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this paſſion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as ſhe can get him——for it is ſure to make him play ſuch phantaſtic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the repreſentation.

A third argument againſt Pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unſocial aſpect: the Scripture ſeldom introduces it alone——Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or ſome inimical paſſion, is ever upon the ſtage with it; the proofs and reaſons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore ſhall ſay no more upon this argument than this,—— that was there no other,——yet the bad company this vice is generally found in,

would be ſufficient by itſelf to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral conſiderations upon this ſubject; a great part of which, as they illuſtrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride in a ſocial light, may ſeem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the paſſion itſelf, and root it out of their nature: to do this effectually, we muſt add the arguments of religion, without which, the beſt moral diſcourſe may prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the paſſion ſo, as not to be injurious to a man's preſent intereſt or quiet; all which a man may learn to practiſe well enough, and yet at the ſame time be a perfect ſtranger to the beſt part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an abſolute conqueſt over the firſt riſings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And, firſt, one of the moſt perſuaſive arguments which religion offers to this end is that which riſes from the ſtate and

condition of ourſelves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impoſſible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!*——*even a thing of nought*——a poor, infirm, miſerable ſhort-lived creature, that paſſes away like a ſhadow, and is haſtening off the ſtage where the theatrical titles and diſtinctions, and the whole maſk of Pride which he has worn for a day will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected ſlave. Send forth your imagination, I beſeech you, to view the laſt ſcene of the greateſt and proudeſt who ever awed and governed the world—ſee the empty vapour diſappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment ſticks faſt within him: ſee—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and ſpirits.

——Approach his bed of ſtate——lift up the curtain——regard a moment with ſilence——

——Are theſe cold hands and pale lips all that is left of him who was canoniz'd by his own pride, or made a god of, by his flatterers?

O my ſoul! with what dreams haſt thou been bewitched? how haſt thou been deluded by the objects thou haſt ſo eagerly graſped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheleſs ſtrike a damp upon human Pride, much more muſt the conſiderations do ſo, which ariſe from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourſelves, my dear Chriſtians, a few moments in this light—behold a diſobedient, ungrateful, intractable, and diſorderly ſet of creatures, going wrong ſeven times in a day,——acting ſometimes every hour of it againſt your own convictions—your own intereſts, and the intentions of your GOD, who wills and propoſes nothing but your happineſs and proſperity——what reaſon does this view furniſh you for Pride? how many does it ſuggeſt to mortify and make you aſhamed? ——well might the ſon of Syrach ſay in that ſarcaſtical remark of his upon it, *That* PRIDE *was not made for man*—— for ſome purpoſes, and for ſome particular beings, the paſſion might have been

ſhaped——but not for him——fancy it where you will, 'tis no where ſo improper —'tis in no creature ſo unbecoming—

——But why ſo cold an aſſent to ſo inconteſted a truth?——Perhaps thou haſt reaſons to be proud:——for heaven's ſake let us hear them——Thou haſt the advantages of birth and title to boaſt of ——or thou ſtandeſt in the ſunſhine of court favour——or thou haſt a large fortune——or great talents——or much learning——or nature has beſtowed her graces upon thy perſon——ſpeak—on which of theſe foundations haſt thou raiſed this fanciful ſtructure?——Let us examine them.

Thou art well born:——then truſt me, 'twill pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank,——diveſts not princes of their titles; it is in life what the *clear obſcure* is in painting; it makes the hero ſtep forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwiſe ſtand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich——then ſhew the greatneſs of thy fortune,——or what is better,

the greatneſs of thy ſoul, in the meekneſs of thy converſation; condeſcend to men of low eſtate——ſupport the diſtreſſed, and patronize the neglected.——Be great; but let it be in conſidering riches as they are; as *talents committed to an earthen veſſel*—That thou art but the *receiver*,—and that to be obliged and to be vain too,—is but the old ſoleciſm of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet,——yet ever make but an abſurd ſociety.

If thou art powerful in intereſt, and ſtandeſt deified by a ſervile tribe of dependents,—why ſhouldeſt thou be proud,—becauſe they are hungry?—Scourge me ſuch ſycophants: they have turned the heads of thouſands as well as thine——

——But 'tis thy own dexterity and ſtrength which have gained thee this eminence:——allow it; but art thou proud that thou ſtandeſt in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge,——where good men may be ready to ſuſpect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down? I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain: Haman was

ſo, becauſe he was admitted alone to queen Eſther's banquet; and the diſtinction raiſed him,——but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dream'd or thought of.

Let us paſs on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou haſt a little, thou wilt be proud of it in courſe: if thou haſt much, and good ſenſe along with it, there will be no reaſon to diſpute againſt the paſſion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a ſorry object of Pride at the beſt;——but more ſo when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet——*_Alas! Maſter,——for it was borrowed._

It is treaſon to ſay the ſame of Beauty ——whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to ſet it off: the weakeſt minds are moſt caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from ſmall and ſlender accidents, through diſability of purchaſing them by better means. In truth, beauty has ſo many charms, one knows

* 2 Kings, vi. 7.

not how to ſpeak againſt it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous ſoul, when the beauty of the face ſpeaks out the modeſty and humility of the mind, and the juſtneſs of the proportion raiſes our thoughts up to the art and wiſdom of the great Creator, ſomething may be allowed it, ——and ſomething to the embelliſhments which ſet it off;—and yet, when the whole apology is read,——it will be found at laſt, that Beauty, like Truth, never is ſo glorious as when it goes the plaineſt.

Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this ſilly world, it ſhould be of this honeſt alliance.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may the GOD of all mercies and kindneſs watch over your paſſions, and inſpire you *with all humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, patience, and long ſuffering.*—Amen.

SERMON XXV.

Humility.

MATTHEW, xi. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.

THE great buſineſs of man, is the regulation of his ſpirit; the poſſeſſion of ſuch a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary ſtages of it, afford us, what we ſhall be ſure to ſtand in need of,——*Reſt unto our ſouls.*

——Reſt unto our ſouls!——'tis all we want—the end of all our wiſhes and purſuits: give us a proſpect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth to have it in poſſeſſion; we ſeek for it in titles, in riches and pleaſures—climb up after it by ambition,——come down again and ſtoop for it by avarice,——try all extremes;

ſtill we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miſerable experiments, that we are convinced at laſt, we have been ſeeking every where for it, but where there is a proſpect of finding it; and that is, within ourſelves, in a meek and lowly diſpoſition of heart. This, and this only, will give us reſt unto our ſouls:——reſt, from thoſe turbulent and haughty paſſions which diſturb our quiet:——reſt, from the provocations and diſappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, againſt all which this frame and preparation of mind is the beſt protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Conſider how great a ſhare of the uneaſineſſes which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their riſe to nothing elſe, but the diſpoſitions of mind which are oppoſite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world,——take it as a rule,——as a man's pride is,——ſo is always his diſpleaſure;——as the opinion of himſelf riſes,——

ſo does the injury,——ſo does his reſentment: 'tis this which gives edge and force to the inſtrument which has ſtruck him,——and excites that heat in the wound which renders it incurable.

See how different the caſe is with the humble man: one half of theſe painful conflicts he actually eſcapes; the other part fall lightly on him:—he provokes no man by contempt; thruſts himſelf forward as the mark of no man's envy: ſo that he cuts off the firſt fretful occaſions of the greateſt part of theſe evils; and for thoſe in which the paſſions of others would involve him, like the humble ſhrub in the valley, gently gives way, and ſcarce feels the injury of thoſe ſtormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by its roots.

If you conſider it with regard to the many diſappointments of this life, which ariſe from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world,—the reaſoning is the ſame.

What we expect,——is ever in proportion to the eſtimate made of ourſelves; when pride and ſelf-love have brought us

in their account of this matter,——we find, that we are worthy of all honours—fit for all places and employments:——as our expectations rise and multiply, so must our disappointments with them; and there needs nothing more to lay the foundation of our unhappiness, and both to make and keep us miserable. And in truth there is nothing so common in life as to see thousands, who, you would say, had all the reason in the world to be at rest, so torn up and disquieted with sorrows of this class, and so incessantly tortured with the disappointments which their pride and passions have created for them, that though they appear to have all the ingredients of happiness in their hands,——they can neither compound or use them:—How should they? the goad is ever in their sides, and so hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no rest day or night.

Humility, therefore, recommends itself as a security against these heart-aches, which though ridiculous sometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are serious enough to the man who suffers them,

and I believe would make no inconſiderable account in a true catalogue of the diſquietudes of mortal man: againſt theſe, I ſay, Humility is the beſt defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his deſires, and conſequently moderate in his purſuit of them: like another man he may fail in his attempts, and loſe the point he aimed at,——but that is all,——he loſes not himſelf,——he loſes not his happineſs and peace of mind with it,—even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.——Bleſſed character! when ſuch a one is thruſt back, who does not pity him?—when he falls, who would not ſtretch out a hand to raiſe him up?

And here, I cannot help ſtopping in the midſt of this argument, to make a ſhort obſervation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility,——we are apt to think it ſtands the moſt naked and defenceleſs of all virtues whatever,——the leaſt able to ſupport its claims againſt the inſolent antagoniſt who ſeems ready to bear him down, and all

oppoſition which ſuch a temper can make.

Now, if we conſider him as ſtanding alone,—no doubt, in ſuch a caſe he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his oppoſer;——but if we conſider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendſhip, and wiſhes of all mankind,——that the other ſtands alone, hated, diſcountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wiſher on his ſide;——when this is balanced, we ſhall have reaſon to change our opinion, and be convinced that the humble man, ſtrengthened with ſuch an alliance, is far from being ſo over-matched as at firſt ſight he may appear;—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all ſuch caſes, where real fortitude and true perſonal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would ſooner look for it in ſuch a temper than in that of his adverſary. Pride may make a man violent,——but Humility will make him firm:——and which of

the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?——he, who acts from the changeable impulse of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,——or the man who stands cool and collected in himself; who governs his resentments, instead of being governed by them, and on every occasion acts upon the steady motives of principle and duty?

But this by the way;——though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the observation is just, and Humility has the advantages where we should least expect them, the argument rises higher in behalf of those which are more apparently on its side.——In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man must never hope for in this world,——that is, *rest to his soul*,——so does he likewise meet with it from the influence such a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance, by the appointment of GOD. For if, as Job says, we are born to trouble as the sparks fly up-

wards, ſurely it is he who thinks the greateſt of theſe troubles below his ſins, —and the ſmalleſt favours above his merit, that is likely to ſuffer the leaſt from the one, and enjoy the moſt from the other: 'tis he who poſſeſſes his ſoul in meekneſs, and keeps it ſubjected to all the iſſues of fortune, that is the fartheſt out of their reach.——No.——He blames not the ſun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor bluſters at the winds, though they bring him no profit.——If the fountain of the humble man riſes not as high as he could wiſh——he thinks, however, that it riſes as high as it ought; and as the laws of nature ſtill do their duty, that he has no cauſe to complain againſt them.

If diſappointed of riches—he knows the providence of GOD is not his debtor; that though he has received leſs than others, yet as he thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt, he has reaſon to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other reſpects,—he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world

was not made for him; and therefore how little ſhare ſoever he has of its advantages, he ſees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of ſin, of ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A ſoul thus turned and reſigned, is carried ſmoothly down the ſtream of providence; no temptations in his paſſage diſquiet him with deſire,——no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others,—— yet by ſeeing the juſtice of what happens, —and humbly giving way to the blow, ——though he is ſmitten, he is not ſmitten like other men, or feels the ſmart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is obſerved by ſome one, that as pride was the paſſion through which ſin and miſery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, when he entered upon

the work of our reſtoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did by endeavouring to bring the ſoul of man back to its original temper of Humility; ſo that his firſt public addreſs from the Mount began with a declaration of bleſſedneſs to the poor in ſpirit,——and almoſt his laſt exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had ſet them of this virtue, and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man,—— and ſo perſuaſive and accommodated to all Chriſtians, that as much pride as there is ſtill in the world, it is not credible but that every believer muſt receive ſome tincture of the character or bias towards it from the example of ſo great, and yet ſo humble a Maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every inſtance of it ſhewed, that he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or ſwell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to caſt a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himſelf

rather as a ſervant than a maſter,——coming, as he continually declared, not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful deſcription of him,——to have no form or comelineſs, nor any beauty that they ſhould deſire him. The voluntary meanneſs of his birth,——the poverty of his life,——the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the Goſpel to the poor,——the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head,——all ſpoke the ſame language:——that the GOD of truth ſhould ſubmit to the ſuſpicion of an impoſture:—his humble deportment under that, and a thouſand provocations of a thankleſs people, ſtill raiſes this character higher;—and what exalts it to its higheſt pitch,——the tender and pathetic proof he gave of the ſame diſpoſition at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of his ſufferings,—when a life full of ſo many inſtances of humility was crowned with the moſt endearing one of *humbling himſelf even to the death of the croſs*;—the death of a ſlave, a malefactor

——dragged to *Calvary*, without oppoſition——inſulted without complaint.——

—Bleſſed JESUS! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart?—how can he but profit when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded—by ſuch an example?

If humility ſhines ſo bright in the character of CHRIST, ſo does it in that of his religion; the true ſpirit of which tends all the ſame way.—Chriſtianity, when rightly explained and practiſed, is all meekneſs and candour, and love and courteſy: and there is no one paſſion our SAVIOUR rebukes ſo often, or with ſo much ſharpneſs, as that one, which is ſubverſive of theſe kind effects,——and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, neceſſarily leads us on to a diſcourteous opinion and treatment of others.——I ſay *neceſſarily*,——becauſe 'tis a natural conſequence, and the progreſs from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our SAVIOUR often remarks in the character of the Phariſees:——they truſted in themſelves,——'twas no wonder then they deſpiſed others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to ſpiritual pride, which, by the way, is the worſt of all prides; and as it is a very bad ſpecies of a very bad paſſion, I cannot do better than conclude the diſcourſe with ſome remarks upon it.

In moſt conceits of a religious ſuperiority, there has uſually gone hand in hand with it, another fancy,——which——I ſuppoſe has fed it;——and that is, a perſuaſion of ſome more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.——Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and aſſiſtance of GOD's ſpirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable ſervice, we learn from Scripture —In what particular manner this is effected, ſo that the act ſhall ſtill be imputed ours——the Scripture ſays not: we know only the account is ſo; but as for any ſenſible demonſtrations of its workings to be felt as ſuch within us—— the word of GOD is utterly ſilent; nor can that ſilence be ſupplied by any experience.———We have none; unleſs you call the falſe pretences to it ſuch,——

ſuggeſted by an enthuſiaſtic or diſtempered fancy. As expreſsly as we are told and pray for the inſpiration of GOD's ſpirit, there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked, to diſtinguiſh them from the efforts and determinations of our own reaſon: and as firmly as moſt Chriſtians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may venture to affirm, that ſince the promiſes were made, there never was a Chriſtian of a cool head and ſound judgment, that, in any inſtance of a change of life, would preſume to ſay, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help,—— or which to the operations of his own mind; or who, upon looking back, would pretend to ſtrike the line, and ſay, "here it was that my own "reflections ended;"—— and at this point the ſuggeſtions of the Spirit of GOD began to take place.

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the diſcovery of ſuch points as GOD never meant us to know, —— we have been more ſucceſsful in our own days:—— thouſands can trace out now the impreſſions of this divine inter-

courſe in themſelves, from the firſt moment they received it, and with ſuch diſtinct intelligence of its progreſs and workings, as to require no evidence of its truth.

It muſt be owned, that the preſent age has not altogether the honour of this diſcovery;—there were too many grounds given to improve on in the religious cant of the laſt century;—when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the ſubjects of ſo much edification; and when, as they do now, the moſt illiterate mechanics, who, as a witty divine ſaid of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able ſo to frame their nonſenſe to the nonſenſe of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they pray'd and preach'd by inſpiration, but that the moſt common actions of their lives were ſet about in the Spirit of the LORD.

The tenets of the quakers (a harmleſs quiet people) are collateral deſcendents from the ſame enthuſiaſtic original; and their accounts and way of reaſoning upon their inward light and ſpiritual wor-

ſhip, are much the ſame; which laſt they carry thus much further, as to believe the Holy Ghoſt comes down upon their aſſemblies, and *moves* them, without regard to condition or ſex, to make interceſſions with unutterable groans.

So that, in fact, the opinions of methodiſts, upon which I was firſt entering, is but a republication with ſome alterations of the ſame extravagant conceits; and as enthuſiaſm generally ſpeaks the ſame language in all ages, 'tis but too ſadly verified in this; for though we have not yet got to the old terms of the incomings and in-dwellings of the Spirit, ——yet we have arrived at the firſt feelings of its entrance, recorded with as particular an exactneſs as an act of filiation,——ſo that numbers will tell you the identical place———the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the Spirit came in upon them, and took poſſeſſion of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our ſide, That there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind: for unleſs a repreſentation of the caſe be a confutation of

its folly to them, they muſt for ever be led captive by a deluſion, from which no reaſoner can redeem them: for if you ſhould inquire, upon what evidence ſo ſtrange a perſuaſion is grounded?—— they will tell you, "They feel it is ſo."——If you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore would wiſh to be ſatisfied by what tokens they are able to diſtinguiſh ſuch emotions from thoſe of fancy and complexion? they will anſwer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language, but 'tis a matter of fact,——they feel its operations as plain and diſtinct, as the natural ſenſations of pleaſure, or the pains of a diſorder'd body.—And ſince I have mention'd a diſorder'd body, I cannot help ſuggeſting, that amongſt the more ſerious and deluded of this ſect, 'tis much to be doubted whether a diſorder'd body has not oft-times as great a ſhare in letting in theſe conceits as a diſorder'd mind.

When a poor diſconſolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment,—prays without ceaſing till his imagination

is heated,——fasts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder, that the mechanical disturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what they are;——or that in such a situation, where the mind sits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its side, is it strange if every commotion should help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter subject for the treatment of a Physician than a Divine?

In many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either, that unless GOD in his mercy rebuke this lying spirit, and call it back,——it may go on and persuade millions into their destruction.

SERMON XXVI.

Advantages of Chriſtianity to the World.

ROMANS, I. 22.

Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is ſo univerſally a bubble, as to that of being thought wiſe: and the affectation of it is ſo viſible, in men of all complexions, that you every day ſee ſome one or other ſo very ſolicitous to eſtabliſh the character, as not to allow himſelf leiſure to do the things which fairly win it;——expending more art and ſtratagem to appear ſo in the eyes of the world, than what would ſuffice to make him ſo in truth.

It is owing to the force of this deſire, that you ſee in general, there is no injury touches a man ſo ſenſibly, as an inſult upon his parts and capacity: tell a man

of other defects, that he wants learning, industry or application,——he will hear your reproof with patience.——Nay you may go further: take him in a proper season, you may tax his morals,——you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct,——passionate or revengeful in his nature—loose in his principles;——deliver it with the gentleness of a friend,——possibly he'll not only bear with you,——but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture, and promise a reformation;——but hint——hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,——touch but that sore place,——from that moment you are look'd upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his resentment and ill-will for ever; so that in general you will find it safer to tell a man, he is a knave than a fool,——and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than a point of common sense.

Strange souls that we are! as if to live well was not the greatest argument of Wisdom;——and, as if what reflected

upon our morals, did not moſt of all reflect upon our underſtandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a ſhift to overlook in the heat of this purſuit; and though we all covet this great character of Wiſdom, there is ſcarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the teſt or the balance; and though 'tis of the laſt conſequence not to be deceived in it,—we generally take it upon truſt, ——ſeldom ſuſpect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconſiſtent a man ſhall be in his opinions of this, and what abſurd meaſures ſoever he takes in conſequence of it, in the conduct of his life, —he ſtill ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul; and like Solomon, when he had leaſt pretence for it,—in the midſt of his nonſenſe will cry out and ſay,——*That all my wiſdom remaineth with me.*

Where then is wiſdom to be found? and where is the place of underſtanding?

The politicians of this world, *profeſſing themſelves wiſe,*——admit of no other

claims of wiſdom but the knowledge of men and buſineſs, the underſtanding the intereſts of ſtates,——the intrigues of courts——the finding out the paſſions and weakneſſes of foreign miniſters——and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage.——

——Not ſo the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wiſdom, is to take care of himſelf;——to be wiſe in his generation;——to make uſe of the opportunity whilſt he has it, of raiſing a fortune, and heraldizing a name. ——Far wide is the ſpeculative and ſtudious man (whoſe office is in the clouds) from ſuch little ideas:——Wiſdom dwells with him in finding out the ſecrets of nature;——ſounding the depths of arts and ſciences;——meaſuring the heavens; telling the number of the ſtars, and calling them all by their names: ſo that when in our buſy imaginations we have built and unbuilt again *God's ſtories in the heavens*, ——and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth; and in the language of the book of Job have ſearched out the cor-

ner-ſtone thereof, we think our titles to wiſdom built upon the ſame baſis with thoſe of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The miſtake of theſe pretenders is ſhewn at large by the Apoſtle, in the chapter from which the text is taken, ——*Profeſſing themſelves* WISE,——in which expreſſion (by the way) St. Paul is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, conſidered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in reſpect of themſelves; and amongſt whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of ſtudy and inquiry had aſſumed to themſelves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wiſe-men.

With what parade and oſtentation ſoever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the moſt mortifying abatements which could happen to Wiſdom; and that was an ignorance of thoſe points which moſt concerned man to know.

This he ſhews from the general ſtate of the Gentile world, in the great article of their miſconceptions of the Deity—— and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions,——of the duties and ſervices they owed to him, and in courſe of what they owed to one another.

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verſes,——*The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world might be clearly ſeen and underſtood, by the things that are made*;——that is,——Though GOD, by the cleareſt diſcovery of himſelf, had ever laid before mankind ſuch evident proofs of his eternal Being,——his infinite powers and perfections, ſo that what is to be known of his inviſible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodneſs,——and the viſible frame and order of the world:——yet ſo utterly were they without excuſe,——that though they knew God, and ſaw his image and ſuperſcription in every part of his works,——*yet they glorified him not.*——So bad a uſe did they make of the powers given them for this great diſcovery, that inſtead

of adoring the Being thus manifeſted to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the moſt groſs and abſurd deluſions,—— *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men —to birds,—to four-footed beaſts and creeping things;——Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe,—they became fools.*—— All their ſpecious wiſdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the moſt diſhonourable of all miſtakes,——in ſetting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poiſoned, no wonder the ſtream ſhewed its effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he deſcribes the heathen world *as full of all unrighteouſneſs*, ——fornication,—— covetouſneſs,—— maliciouſneſs,——full of murder,—— envy,——debate,——malignity,——whiſperers,——backbiters,——haters of GOD, ——proud,——boaſters,——inventors of evil things,——diſobedient to parents,—— without underſtanding, without natural affection,———implacable,———unmerci-

ful?——God in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

But these disorders, if fairly considered, you'll say, have in no ages arisen so much from want of light, as a want of disposition to follow the light which God has ever imparted: that the law written in their hearts was clear and express enough for any reasonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not suffered their passions more forcibly to direct them otherwise: that if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the same prejudice will recur even against the Christian religion; since mankind have at least been as wicked in later days, as in the more remote and simple ages of the world; and that, if we may trust to facts, there are no vices which the Apostle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the Gospel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Christian world since.

This necessarily brings us to an inquiry, Whether Christianity has done the world

any ſervice?——and, How far the morals of it have been made better ſince this ſyſtem has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppoſe facts to facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us ſee how far their miſtakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the ſubject.

That there was one ſupreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worſhipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and ſo obvious a truth in nature,——that Reaſon, as the Apoſtle acknowledges, was always able to diſcover it: and yet it ſeems ſtrange, that the ſame faculty which made the diſcovery, ſhould be ſo little able to keep true to its own judgment, and ſupport it long againſt the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propenſity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of ſomething to have gone hand in hand with reaſon, and fixed the perſuaſion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one GOD the Ma-

ker and Supporter of Heaven and Earth, infinite in wiſdom, and knowledge, and all perfections;——how ſoon was this ſimple idea loſt, and mankind led to diſpoſe of theſe attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and ſubdivide them again amongſt deities, which their own dreams had given ſubſtance to;——his eternal power and dominion parcell'd out to gods of the land,——to gods of the ſea, to gods of the infernal regions: whilſt the great GOD of gods, and LORD of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world,——who is ſo great that nought is able to controul or withſtand his power, was ſuppoſed to reſt contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within ſuch parts of his empire, as they diſmembered and aſſigned to others.

If the number of their gods and this partition of their power, would leſſen the idea of their majeſty, What muſt be the opinions of their origin? When inſtead of that glorious deſcription, which Scripture gives of "The Ancient of days who "inhabiteth eternity,"——they gravely

assigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; so that there was scarce a hamlet or even a desert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by some favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered such conceits the more gross and absurd,——they supposed not only that the gods they worshipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleshly parents, and accordingly they attributed to them corporeal shapes and difference of sex: and indeed in this they were a little consistent, for their deities seemed to partake so much of the frailties to which flesh and blood is subject, that their history and their pedigree were much of a piece, and might reasonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the most unmanly sensualities, and what would be a reproach to human nature, ——such as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, incest: and even in the accounts which we have from the sublimest of their poets, ——what are they, but anecdotes of their

ſquabbles amongſt themſelves—their intrigues, their jealouſies, their ungovernable tranſports of choler,—nay, even their theſts—their drunkenneſs, and bloodſhed?

Here let us ſtop a moment and inquire, what was Reaſon doing all this time, to be ſo miſerably inſulted and abuſed? Where held ſhe her empire whilſt her bulwarks were thus borne down, and her firſt principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If ſhe was able by herſelf to regain the power ſhe had loſt, and put a ſtop to this folly and confuſion, ——why did ſhe not? if ſhe was not able to reſiſt this torrent alone,—the point is given up——ſhe wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But though reaſon, you'll ſay, could not overthrow theſe popular miſtakes, ——yet it ſaw the folly of them, and was at all times able to diſprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent inquirers after truth, did not in fact fall into theſe abſurd notions, which, by the way, is an obſervation more to our purpoſe than

theirs, who uſually make it, and ſhews that though their reaſonings were good, that there always wanted ſomething which they could not ſupply to give them ſuch weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwiſe was but an opinion without force.

Beſides——which is a more direct anſwer,——though 'tis true the ableſt men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods, ——(for they had a religion for themſelves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which neceſſarily ſupported theſe very miſtakes, ——namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I ſuppoſe more for quietneſs than principle's ſake) to worſhip the gods of his country; which, by the way, conſidering their numbers, was not ſo eaſy a taſk, ——for what with celeſtial gods, and gods aërial, terreſtrial and infernal, with the goddeſſes, their wives and miſtreſſes, upon the loweſt computation, the heathen world acknowledged no leſs than thirty

thouſand deities, all which claimed the rights and ceremonies of religious worſhip.

But 'twill be ſaid, allowing the bulk of mankind were under ſuch deluſions, ——they were ſtill but ſpeculative.—— What was that to their practice? however defective in their theology and more abſtracted points, their morality was no way connected with it.——There is no need, that the everlaſting laws of juſtice and mercy ſhould be fetched down from above,——ſince they can be proved from more obvious mediums;——they were as neceſſary for the ſame good purpoſes of ſociety then as now; and we may preſume they ſaw their intereſt and purſued it.

That the neceſſities of ſociety, and the impoſſibilities of its ſubſiſting otherwiſe, would point out the convenience, or if you will,——the duty of ſocial virtues, is unqueſtionable:—but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear ſo far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious ſenſe of the duty, can act without the influence of the other: ſurely the

moſt exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue,——muſt come down from *above*,——from the love and imitation of the goodneſs of that Being in whoſe ſight we wiſh to render ourſelves acceptable: this will operate at all times and all places,——in the darkeſt cloſet as much as on the greateſt and moſt public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or ſuch impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many ſecret trials of our virtue, we ſhould not determine our caſes of conſcience with much the ſame kind of caſuiſtry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjuſtifiable purſuit, and happening to ſee a picture which repreſented a known ſtory of Jupiter in a like tranſaction,——argued the matter thus within himſelf.—— If the great Jupiter could not reſtrain his appetites, and deny himſelf an indulgence of this kind——*ego Homuncio hoc non facerem?* ſhall I a mortal,—an inconſiderable mortal too, cloathed with infirmities

of flesh and blood,—pretend to a virtue, which the Father of gods and men could not? What insolence!

The conclusion was natural enough; and as so great a master of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then understood; it was copied from common life, and was not the first application which had been made of the story.

It will scarce admit of a question, Whether vice would not naturally grow bold upon the credit of such an example; or whether such impressions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world; and had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of such notions to corrupt them, it had been sufficient reason to believe it was so.

No doubt, there is sufficient room for amendment in the Christian world, and we may be said to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, considering what motives we have from the purity of our religion, and the force of its sanctions, to make us better:——yet still I affirm,

if these restraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worse; and though some sense of morality might be preserved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more considerate of us, yet in general I am persuaded, that the bulk of mankind, upon such a supposition, would soon come to *live without* GOD *in the world*, and in a short time differ from Indians themselves in little else but their complexions.

If, after all, the Christian religion has not left a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,——the short and true answer is this, That there can be none.

It is sufficient to leave us without excuse, that the excellency of this institution in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;—— every page is an address to our hearts to win them to these purposes;——but as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural necessity, but by moral persuasion, which sets good and evil before them,——so that if men have power to do the evil and chuse the good,

——and will abuſe it,——this cannot be avoided.——Religion even implies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to ſtand and free to fall;——and therefore men who will not be perſuaded by this way of addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

SERMON XXVII.

The Abuſes of Conſcience conſidered.

HEBREWS, XIII. 18.

——For we truſt we have a good Conſcience.——

TRUST!——Truſt we have a good Conſcience!——Surely you will ſay, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the moſt indiſputable evidence, it muſt be this very thing,——Whether he has a good Conſcience, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a ſtranger to the true ſtate of this account:——He muſt be privy to his own thoughts and deſires——He muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and know certainly the true ſprings and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life.

In other matters we may be deceived by falſe appearances; and as the wiſe man complains, *Hardly do we gueſs aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us:*——but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herſelf:—— is conſcious of the web ſhe has wove:—— knows its texture and fineneſs; and the exact ſhare which every paſſion has had in working upon the ſeveral deſigns, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now,——as Conſcience is nothing elſe but the knowledge which the mind has within itſelf of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or cenſure, which it unavoidably makes upon the ſucceſſive actions of our lives,——'tis plain, you will ſay, from the very terms of the propoſition, whenever this inward teſtimony goes againſt a man, and he ſtands ſelf-accuſed,—that he muſt neceſſarily be a *guilty man.* And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his ſide, and his heart condemns him not,——that it

is not a matter of *truſt*, as the Apoſtle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conſcience is good*, and that the *man* muſt be *good* alſo.

At firſt ſight, this may ſeem to be a true ſtate of the caſe; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is ſo truly impreſs'd upon the mind of man; that did no ſuch thing ever happen, as that the Conſcience of a man, by long habits of ſin, might (as the Scripture aſſures us it may) inſenſibly become hard; and like ſome tender parts of his body, by much ſtreſs, and continual hard uſage, loſe, by degrees, that nice ſenſe and perception with which GOD and nature endowed it:——Did this never happen:—or was it certain that ſelf-love could never hang the leaſt bias upon the judgment:—or that the little intereſts below could riſe up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompaſs them about with clouds and thick darkneſs:——could no ſuch thing as favour and affection enter this ſacred court:——did WIT diſdain to take a bribe in it, or was aſhamed to ſhew its face as an

advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment: —or, laſtly, were we aſſured that INTEREST ſtood always unconcern'd whilſt the cauſe was hearing,—and that PASSION never got into the judgment-ſeat, and pronounced ſentence in the ſtead of Reaſon, which is ſuppoſed always to preſide and determine upon the caſe:—was this truly ſo, as the objection muſt ſuppoſe, no doubt, then, the religious and moral ſtate of a man would be exactly what he himſelf eſteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better meaſure, than the degrees of his own approbation or cenſure.

I own, in one caſe, whenever a man's Conſcience does accuſe him (as it ſeldom errs on that ſide) that he is guilty; and, unleſs in melancholy and hypochondriac caſes, we may ſafely pronounce that there is always ſufficient grounds for the accuſation.

But, the converſe of the propoſition will not hold true,——namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conſcience muſt accuſe; and, if it does not, that a

man is therefore innocent.——This is not fact:——ſo that the common conſolation which ſome good Chriſtian or other is hourly adminiſtering to himſelf,——That he thanks GOD his mind does not miſgive him; and that conſequently, he has a good Conſcience, becauſe he has a quiet one—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at firſt ſight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to ſo much error, from a falſe application of it:—the principle on which it goes ſo often perverted:—the whole force of it loſt, and ſometimes ſo vilely caſt away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man ſhall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable in his conduct to the world: ſhall live ſhameleſs,——in the open commiſſion of a ſin which no reaſon or pretence can juſtify;—a ſin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he ſhall

ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt;——rob her of her beſt dowry;——and not only cover her own head with diſhonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in ſhame and ſorrow for her ſake.——Surely,——you'll think, Conſcience muſt lead ſuch a man a troubleſome life:——he can have no reſt night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conſcience had ſomething elſe to do all this time than break in upon him: as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this *domeſtic god* was either *talking, or purſuing, or was in a journey, or, peradventure, he ſlept, and could not be awoke.* Perhaps he was gone out in company with HONOUR, to fight a duel;——to pay off ſome debt at play;——or dirty annuity, the bargain of his luſt.——Perhaps, Conſcience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud againſt petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon ſome ſuch puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life ſecured him againſt all temptation of committing:——ſo that he lives as merrily,——ſleeps as ſoundly in his

bed;——and, at the laſt, meets death with as much unconcern,——perhaps, much more ſo, than a much better man.

Another is ſordid, unmerciful;—a ſtrait-hearted, ſelfiſh wretch, incapable either of private friendſhips, or public ſpirit.——Take notice how he paſſes by the widow and orphan in their diſtreſs; and ſees all the miſeries incident to human life without a ſigh or a prayer.——Shall not Conſcience riſe up and ſting him on ſuch occaſions? No.——Thank GOD, there is no occaſion. 'I pay every 'man his own,——I have no fornication 'to anſwer to my Conſcience, no faithleſs vows or promiſes to make up, I 'have debauch'd no man's wife or child. '——Thank GOD, I am not as other 'men, adulterers, unjuſt, or even as this 'libertine who ſtands before me.'

A third is crafty and deſigning in his nature.——View his whole life,——'tis nothing elſe but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable ſubterfuges, baſely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing, and the ſafe enjoyment of our ſeveral properties.——You

will ſee ſuch a one working out a frame of little deſigns upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man: ——ſhall raiſe a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,—— or the unſuſpecting temper of his friend, who would have truſted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and ſtate it over again with his Conſcience ——Conſcience looks into the *Statutes at Large*,——finds perhaps no *expreſs law* broken by what he has done;—— perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd; ——ſees no ſcourge waving over his head, ——or priſon opening its gate upon him ——What is there to affright his Conſcience?——Conſcience has got ſafely entrenched behind the letter of the law, ſits there invulnerable, fortified with *caſes* and *reports* ſo ſtrongly on all ſides,—— that 'tis not preaching can diſpoſſeſs it of its hold.

Another ſhall want even this refuge, ——ſhall break through all this ceremony of ſlow chicane; ſcorns the doubtful workings of ſecret plots and cautious

trains to bring about his purpose.——See the barefaced villain how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders,——horrid! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this case,——the poor man was in the dark!——His priest had got the keeping of his Conscience, and all he had let him know of it was, That he must believe in the *Pope*;—go to mass;——cross himself;——tell his beads;——be a good Catholic; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?——if he perjures?————Why,——he had a mental reservation in it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him,——if he robs or murders, will not Conscience, on every such act, receive a wound itself?——Ay,——But the man has carried it to confession, the wound digests there, and will do well enough,——and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Popery!* what hast thou to answer for?——when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through

which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itſelf above all things,——thou haſt wilfully ſet open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*,——too apt, GOD knows, to go aſtray of himſelf,——and confidently ſpeak peace to his ſoul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common inſtances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impoſſible for man to be ſuch a bubble to himſelf,—I muſt refer him a moment to his reflections, and ſhall then venture to truſt the appeal with his own heart. Let him conſider in how different a degree of deteſtation numbers of wicked actions ſtand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures——he will ſoon find that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom have prompted him to commit, are generally dreſs'd out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others to which he feels no

propenſity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurpriſed Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe, ——we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done.——But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant ſervant, whom he ought to have loved and honour'd, fell to make way for his luſt; where *Conſcience* had ſo much greater reaſon to take the alarm,——his heart ſmote him not.——A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of that crime——to the time Nathan was ſent to reprove him; and we read not once of the leaſt ſorrow or compunction of heart, which he teſtified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conſcience, this once able monitor,—placed on high as a judge within us,——and intended, by our Maker, as a juſt and equitable one too,—by an unhappy train of cauſes and impediments, ——takes often ſuch imperfect cognizance of what paſſes,——does its office ſo negligently,—ſometimes ſo corruptly,

that it is not to be trusted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

So that if you would form a just judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in, namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,——an useful citizen,——a faithful subject to your king,——or a good servant to your God——call in Religion and Morality.——Look——What is written in the law of God?——How readest thou?——Consult calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth,——What say they?

Let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports,——and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,——which is the case the Apostle supposes,——the rule will be infallible——*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;——that is, have just grounds to believe the judgment thou hast past upon thyself, *is* the judgment of God; and nothing else but an anticipation of that righteous sentence, which

will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Bleſſed is the man, indeed then, as the Author of the book of *Eccleſiaſticus* expreſſes it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his ſins —Bleſſed is the man whoſe heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich,* continues he, *or whether he be poor,——if he have a good heart* (a heart thus guided and inform'd)——*He ſhall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance——His mind ſhall tell him more than ſeven watchmen that ſit above upon a tower on high.*—In the darkeſt doubts it ſhall conduct him ſafer than a thouſand Caſuiſts, and give the ſtate he lives in, a better ſecurity for his behaviour, than all the clauſes and reſtrictions put together, which the wiſdom of the legiſlature is forced to multiply,——forced, I ſay, as things ſtand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure neceſſity, brought in to fence againſt the miſchievous effects of thoſe Conſciences

which are no law unto themſelves: wiſely intending by the many proviſions made, That in all ſuch corrupt or miſguided caſes, where principle and the checks of Conſcience will not make us upright, ——to ſupply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal meaſures of right and wrong:—— the firſt of theſe will comprehend the duties of religion: the ſecond thoſe of morality: which are ſo inſeparably connected together, that you cannot divide theſe two *Tables*, even in imagination (though the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking and mutually deſtroying them both.

I ſaid the attempt is often made;—— and ſo it is;——there being nothing more common than to ſee a man, who has no ſenſe at all of religion,——and indeed has *ſo much* of honeſty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bittereſt affront, ſhould you but hint

at a ſuſpicion of his moral character,—— or imagine he was not conſcientiouſly juſt, and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite.

When there is ſome appearance that it is ſo,—— though one is not willing even to ſuſpect the appearance of ſo great a virtue, as moral honeſty;—yet were we to look into the grounds of it in the preſent caſe, I am perſuaded we ſhould find little reaſon to envy ſuch a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompouſly as he can on the ſubject, it will be found at laſt to reſt upon no better foundation than either his intereſt, his pride, his eaſe; or ſome ſuch little and changeable paſſion, as will give us but ſmall dependence upon his actions in matters of great ſtreſs.

Give me leave to illuſtrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the phyſician I uſually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jeſt of it every day, and treat all its ſanctions with ſo much ſcorn and contempt, as to put the matter paſt doubt. Well,——notwithſtanding this I

put my fortune into the hands of the one, ——and, what is dearer ſtill to me, I truſt my life to the honeſt ſkill of the other.——Now, let me examine what is my reaſon for this great confidence.—— Why,—in the firſt place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power, I put into their hands, to my diſadvantage. I conſider that honeſty ſerves the purpoſes of this life,——I know their ſucceſs in the world depends upon the fairneſs of their character;——that they cannot hurt me without hurting themſelves more.

But put it otherwiſe, namely, that intereſt lay for once on the other ſide.—— That a caſe ſhould happen wherein the one, without ſtain to his reputation, could ſecrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world:——or that the other could ſend me out of it, and enjoy an eſtate by my death, without diſhonour to himſelf or his art——In this caſe what hold have I of either of them?——Religion, the ſtrongeſt of all motives, is out of the queſtion.——Intereſt, the next moſt powerful motive in this world, is ſtrongly

againſt me.——I have nothing left to caſt into the ſcale to balance this temptation. ——I muſt lie at the mercy of honour, ——or ſome ſuch capricious principle. —Strait ſecurity! for two of my beſt and moſt valuable bleſſings,——my property and my life!

As therefore we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;—— ſo, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be ſuppoſed to diſcharge his duties to GOD, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out, that he does ſo,) if he does not pay as conſcientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creature.

This is a point capable in itſelf of ſtrict demonſtration. —— Nevertheleſs, 'tis no rarity to ſee a man whoſe real moral merit ſtands very low, who yet entertains the higheſt notion of himſelf, in the light of a devout and religious man. He ſhall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,——but even wanting in points of common honeſty.——Yet becauſe he talks loud againſt the infidelity of the age,——

is zealous for ſome points of religion, ——goes twice a day to church, attends the ſacraments, and amuſes himſelf with a few inſtrumental duties of religion, ——ſhall cheat his conſcience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has diſcharged faithfully his duty to GOD: and you will find that ſuch a man, through force of this deluſion, generally looks down with ſpiritual pride upon every other man who has leſs affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honeſty than himſelf.

This is likewiſe a ſore evil under the ſun; and I believe there is no one miſtaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more ſerious miſchiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the hiſtory of the *Romiſh* church.—See what ſcenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodſhed, have all been ſanctified by a religion not ſtrictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the cruſading ſword of this miſguided Saint-Errant ſpared neither age, or merit, or ſex, or condition!———And, as he fought under the banners of a religion,

which ſet him looſe from juſtice and humanity,——he ſhewed none,——mercileſsly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their diſtreſſes.

If the teſtimony of paſt centuries in this matter is not ſufficient,——conſider at this inſtant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do ſervice and honour to GOD, by actions which are a diſhonour and ſcandal to themſelves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the priſons of the inquiſition.——Behold *religion* with mercy and juſtice chain'd down under her feet,——there ſitting ghaſtly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and inſtruments of torment.——Hark!——What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, juſt brought forth to undergo the anguiſh of a mock-trial, and endure the utmoſt pains that a ſtudied ſyſtem of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpleſs victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body ſo waſted with ſorrow and long

confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.——Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.—— What convulsions it has thrown him into. Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.——What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.———Good GOD! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,——but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,——dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,——and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle—— this principle that there can be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The surest way to try the merit of any disputed notion,——is to trace down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with the *spirit* of Christianity.——'Tis the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these and such like cases,——and is worth a thousand arguments.—*By their fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them.*

Thus religion and morality, like faſt friends and natural allies, can never be ſet at variance, without the mutual ruin and diſhonour of them both; —— and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wiſher to either,——and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality, as well as his religion, will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this diſcourſe, than by two or three ſhort and independent rules, deducible from what has been ſaid.

1*ſt*, Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon, but his paſſions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are diſagreeable and troubleſome neighbours, and where they ſeparate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cauſe but quietneſs ſake.

2*dly*, When a man thus repreſented, tells you in any particular inſtance, that ſuch a thing goes *againſt* his conſcience, ——always believe he means exactly the ſame thing as when he tells you ſuch a thing goes againſt his ſtomach,——a pre-

ſent want of appetite being generally the true cauſe of both.

In a word,——truſt that man in nothing,——who has not a conſcience in every thing.

And in your own caſe remember this plain diſtinction, a miſtake which has ruin'd thouſands——That your conſcience is not a law;—no,—GOD and reaſon made the law, and has placed Conſcience within you to determine,—not like an *Aſiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own paſſions; but like a *Britiſh judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,——but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

SERMON XXVIII.

Temporal Advantages of Religion.

PROVERBS, III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

THERE are two opinions which the inconſiderate are apt to take upon truſt.—The firſt is—a vicious life, is a life of liberty, pleaſure, and happy advantages.—The ſecond is—and which is the converſe of the firſt—that a religious life is a ſervile and moſt uncomfortable ſtate.

The firſt breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was by the help of the firſt of theſe ſuggeſtions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, ſhe ſhould be as God, that is, ſhe ſhould reap ſome high and ſtrange felicity from doing what was forbidden her.—But I need not repeat the ſucceſs

—Eve learnt the difference between good and evil by her tranſgreſſion, which ſhe knew not before—but then ſhe fatally learnt at the ſame time, that the difference was only this—that good is that which can only give the mind pleaſure and comfort—and that evil is that, which muſt neceſſarily be attended ſooner or later with ſhame and ſorrow.

As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race—ſo has he carried it on ever ſince by the very ſame argument of deluſion. —— That is, by poſſeſſing men's minds early with great expectations of the preſent incomes of ſin, —— making them dream of wondrous gratifications they are to feel in following their appetites in a forbidden way—making them fancy, that their own grapes yield not ſo delicious a taſte as their neighbour's, and that they ſhall quench their thirſt with more pleaſure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at firſt too generally prevails—till experience and proper ſeaſons of reflection make us all at one time or other confeſs—that our counſellor has

been (as from the beginning) an impoſtor——and that inſtead of fulfilling theſe hopes of gain and ſweetneſs in what is forbidden—that, on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterneſs and loſs.

The ſecond opinion, or, That a religious life is a ſervile and uncomfortable ſtate, has proved a no leſs fatal and capital falſe principle in the conduct of unexperience through life—the foundation of which miſtake ariſing chiefly from this previous wrong judgment—that true happineſs and freedom lies in a man's always following his own humour—that to live by moderate and preſcribed rules, is to live without joy——that not to proſecute our paſſions is to be cowards—and to forego every thing for the tedious diſtance of a future life.

Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleaſure but what ſhould ariſe from that remote proſpect——I own we are by nature ſo goaded on by the deſire of preſent happineſs, that was that the caſe, thouſands would faint under the diſcouragement of ſo remote an expectation.

——But in the mean time the Scriptures give us a very different proſpect of this matter.—There we are told that the ſervice of God is true liberty—that the yoke of Chriſtianity is eaſy, in compariſon of that yoke which muſt be brought upon us by any other ſyſtem of living,—and the text tells of wiſdom—by which he means Religion, that it has pleaſantneſs in its way, as well as glory in its end——that it will bring us peace and joy, ſuch as the world cannot give.——So that upon examining the truth of this aſſertion, we ſhall be ſet right in this error, by ſeeing that a religious man's happineſs does not ſtand at ſo tedious a diſtance—but is ſo preſent, and indeed ſo inſeparable from him, as to be felt and taſted every hour—and of this even the vicious can hardly be inſenſible, from what he may perceive to ſpring up in his mind, from any caſual act of virtue. And though it is a pleaſure that properly belongs to the good—yet let any one try the experiment, and he will ſee what is meant by that moral delight ariſing from the conſcience of well-doing.—Let him but refreſh the

bowels of the needy—let him comfort the broken-hearted—or check an appetite, or overcome a temptation—or receive an affront with temper and meekneſs—and he ſhall find the tacit praiſe of what he has done, darting through his mind, accompanied with a ſincere pleaſure—conſcience playing the monitor even to the looſe and moſt inconſiderate, in their moſt caſual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whiſpering behind and ſaying—this is the way of pleaſantneſs—this is the path of peace—walk in it.—

But to do further juſtice to the text, we muſt look beyond this inward recompence which is always inſeparable from virtue ——and take a view of the outward advantages, which are as inſeparable from it, and which the apoſtle particularly refers to, when 'tis ſaid, Godlineſs has the promiſe of this life, as well as that which is to come—and in this argument it is, that religion appears in all its glory and ſtrength—unanſwerable in all its obligations——that beſides the principal work which it does for us in ſecuring our future well-being in the other world, it is like-

wise the most effectual means to promote our present——and that not only *morally*, upon account of that reward which virtuous actions do entitle a man unto from a just and a wise providence,—but by a natural tendency in themselves, which the duties of religion have *to procure* us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all those things, wherein our temporal happiness is thought to consist, and this not only in promoting the well-being of particular persons, but of public communities and of mankind in general,——agreeable to what the wise man has left us on record, that righteousness exalteth a nation:—insomuch, that could we, in considering this argument, suppose ourselves to be in a capacity of expostulating with GOD, concerning the terms upon which we would submit to his government,——and to chuse the laws ourselves which we would be bound to observe, it would be impossible for the wit of man to frame any other proposals, which upon all accounts would be more advantageous to our own interests than those very conditions to which we are obliged by the rules

of religion and virtue.—And in this does the reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, and the beauty and wiſdom of Providence, appear moſt eminently towards mankind, in governing us by ſuch laws as do moſt apparently tend to make us happy,—— and in a word, in making that (in his mercy) to be our duty, which in his wiſdom he knows to be our intereſt,—that is to ſay, what is moſt conducive to the eaſe and comfort of our mind,—the health and ſtrength of our body,—the honour and proſperity of our ſtate and condition,—the friendſhip and good-will of our fellow-creatures;—to the attainment of all which, no more effectual means can poſſibly be made uſe of, than that plain direction,—to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right, to uſe no deceit in our tongue, nor do evil to our neighbour.

For the better imprinting of which truth in your memories, give me leave to offer a few things to your conſideration.

The firſt is,—that juſtice and honeſty contribute very much towards all the fa-

culties of the mind: I mean, that it clears up the underſtanding from that miſt, which dark and crooked deſigns are apt to raiſe in it,—and that it keeps up a regularity in the affections, by ſuffering no luſts or *by-ends* to diſorder them.—That it likewiſe preſerves the mind from all damps of grief and melancholy, which are the ſure conſequences of unjuſt actions; and that by ſuch an improvement of the faculties, it makes a man ſo much the abler to diſcern, and ſo much the more cheerful, active, and diligent to mind his buſineſs.—Light is ſown for the righteous, ſays the prophet, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.

Secondly, let it be obſerved,—that in the continuance and courſe of a virtuous man's affairs, there is little probability of his falling into conſiderable diſappointments or calamities;—not only becauſe guarded by the providence of GOD, but that honeſty is in its own nature the freeſt from danger.

Firſt, becauſe ſuch a one lays no projects, which it is the intereſt of another to blaſt, and therefore needs no indirect

methods or deceitful practices to secure his interest by undermining others.—The paths of virtue are plain and straight, so that the blind, persons of the meanest capacity, shall not err.—Dishonesty requires skill to conduct it, and as great art to conceal—what 'tis every one's interest to detect. And I think I need not remind you how oft it happens in attempts of this kind—where worldly men, in haste to be rich, have over-run the only means to it,—and for want of laying their contrivances with proper cunning, or managing them with proper secrecy and advantage, have lost for ever, what they might have certainly secured by honesty and plain-dealing.—The general causes of the disappointments in their business, or of unhappiness in their lives, lying but too manifestly in their own disorderly passions, which by attempting to carry them a shorter way to riches and honour, disappoint them of both for ever, and make plain their ruin is from themselves, and that they eat the fruits which their own hands have watered and ripened.

Conſider, in the third place, that as the religious and moral man (one of which he cannot be without the other) not only takes the ſureſt courſe for ſucceſs in his affairs, but is diſpoſed to procure a help, which never enters into the thoughts of a wicked one; for being conſcious of upright intentions, he can look towards heaven, and with ſome aſſurance recommend his affairs to GOD's bleſſing and direction:——whereas the fraudulent and diſhoneſt man dares not call for GOD's bleſſing upon his deſigns,—or if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it.—Now a man who believes that he has GOD on his ſide, acts with another ſort of life and courage, than he who knows he ſtands alone;—like Eſau, with his hand againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt his.

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry, but the face of the LORD is againſt them that do evil.

Conſider, in the fourth place, that in all good governments who underſtand

their own intereſt, the upright and honeſt man ſtands much fairer for preferment, and much more likely to be employed in all things when fidelity is wanted:—for all men, however the caſe ſtands with themſelves, they love at leaſt to find honeſty in thoſe they truſt; nor is there any uſage we more hardly digeſt, than that of being outwitted and deceived.—This is ſo true an obſervation, that the greateſt knaves have no other way to get into buſineſs, but by counterfeiting honeſty, and pretending to be what they are not; and when the impoſture is diſcovered, as it is a thouſand to one but it will, I have juſt ſaid, what muſt be the certain conſequence:—for when ſuch a one falls,—he has none to help him, ſo he ſeldom riſes again.

This brings us to a fifth particular, in vindication of the text,—That a virtuous man has this ſtrong advantage on his ſide (the reverſe of the laſt), that the more and the longer he is known, ſo much the better he is loved, ſo much the more truſted;—ſo that his reputation and his fortune have a gradual increaſe:—and

if calamities or croſs accidents ſhould bear him down,—(as no one ſtands out of their reach in this world)——if he ſhould fall, who would not pity his diſtreſs,—who would not ſtretch forth his hand to raiſe him from the ground!——wherever there was virtue, he might expect to meet a friend and brother.—And this is not merely ſpeculation but fact, confirmed by numberleſs examples in life, of men falling into misfortunes, whoſe character and tried probity have raiſed them helps, and bore them up, when every other help has forſook them.

Laſtly, to ſum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its ſide,—let us not forget that greateſt of all happineſs, which the text refers to—in the expreſſion of all its paths being peace, peace and content of mind, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of virtue, which is the true and only foundation of all earthly ſatisfaction; and where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you beſtow upon a wicked man, they will as ſoon add a cubit to his ſtature as to his happineſs.—In the midſt of the higheſt

entertainments,——this, like the hand-writing upon the wall, will be enough to ſpoil and diſreliſh the feaſt;—but much more ſo, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over,—when all is ſtill and ſilent, when the ſinner has nothing to do but attend its laſhes and remorſes;—and this, in ſpite of all the common arts of diverſion, will be often the caſe of every wicked man;—for we cannot live always upon the ſtretch;—our faculties will not bear conſtant pleaſure any more than conſtant pain;——there will be ſome vacancies; and when there are, they will be ſure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections.—So that, ſetting aſide the great after-reckoning, the pleaſures of the wicked are overbought, even in this world.—

I conclude with one obſervation upon the whole of this argument, which is this.——

Notwithſtanding the great force with which it has been often urged by good writers,—there are many caſes which it may not reach,—wherein vicious men

may ſeem to enjoy their portion of this life, and live as happy, and fall into as few troubles as other men;—and therefore it is prudent not to lay more ſtreſs upon this argument than it will bear:—but always remember to call in to our aid, that great and more unanſwerable argument, which will anſwer the moſt doubtful caſes which can be ſtated,—and that is, certainty of a future life, which Chriſtianity has brought to light. However men may differ in their opinions of the uſefulneſs of virtue for our preſent purpoſes, no one was ever ſo abſurd, as to deny it ſerved our beſt and our laſt intereſt,—when the little intereſts of this life were at an end:—upon which conſideration we ſhould always lay the great weight which it is fitteſt to bear, as the ſtrongeſt appeal, and moſt unchangeable motive that can govern our actions at all times.—However, as every good argument on the ſide of religion ſhould in proper times be made uſe of,—it is fit ſometimes to examine this,—by proving virtue is not even deſtitute of a pre-

ſent reward,—but carries in her hand a ſufficient recompence for all the ſelf-denials ſhe may occaſion:—ſhe is pleaſant in the way, as well as in the end;—her ways being ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace.—But it is her greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed glory,—that ſhe befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the laſt; and this is a portion ſhe can never be diſinherited of,—which may GOD of his mercy grant us all, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt.

SERMON XXIX.

Our Converſation in Heaven.

PHILIP. III. 20. 1ſt Part.

For our converſation is in Heaven.

THESE words are the concluſion of the account which St. Paul renders of himſelf, to juſtify that particular part of his conduct and proceeding,—his leaving ſo ſtrangely, and deſerting his Jewiſh rites and ceremonies, to which he was known to have been formerly ſo much attached, and in defence of which he had been ſo warmly and ſo remarkably engaged. This, as it had been matter of provocation againſt him amongſt his own countrymen the Jews, ſo was it no leſs an occaſion of ſurpriſe to the Gentiles;—that a perſon of his great character, intereſt, and reputation,—one who was deſcended from a tribe of Iſrael, deeply ſkilled in the profeſſions, and zealous in the *ob-*

ſervances of the ſtraiteſt ſect of that religion; who had their tenets inſtilled into him from his tender years, under the inſtitution of the ableſt maſters;—a Phariſee himſelf,—the ſon of a Phariſee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,—one that was ſo deeply intereſted, and an acceſſary in the perſecution of another religion, juſt then newly come up;—a religion to which his whole ſect, as well as himſelf, had been always the bittereſt and moſt inveterate enemies, and were conſtantly upbraided as ſuch, by the firſt founder of it;—that a perſon ſo beſet, and hemm'd in with intereſts and prejudices on all ſides, ſhould after all turn proſelyte to the very religion he had hated;—a religion too, under the moſt univerſal contempt of any then in the world,—the chiefs and leaders of it men of the loweſt birth and education, without any advantages of parts or learning, or other endowments to recommend them:—that he ſhould quit and abandon all his former privileges, to become merely a fellow-labourer with theſe,—that he ſhould give up the reputation he had acquired amongſt

his brethren by the ſtudy and labours of a whole life;——that he ſhould give up his friends,—his relations and family, from whom he eſtranged and baniſhed himſelf for life;——this was an event ſo very extraordinary, ſo odd and unaccountable,—that it might well confound the minds of men to anſwer for it.—— It was not to be accounted for upon the common rules and meaſures of proceeding in human life.——

The apoſtle, therefore, ſince no one elſe could do it ſo well for him, comes, in this chapter, to give an explanation why he had thus forſaken ſo many worldly advantages,—which was owing to a greater and more unconquerable affection to a better and more valuable intereſt, that in the poor perſecuted faith,—which he had once reproached and deſtroyed,—he had now found ſuch a fulneſs of divine grace, ——ſuch unfathomable depths of GOD'S infinite mercy, and love towards mankind, that he could think nothing too much to part with in order to his embracing Chriſtianity;—nay, he accounted all things but loſs,—that is, leſs than

nothing, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle, after this apology for himself, proceeds, in the second verse before the text, to give a very different representation of the worldly views and sensual principles of other pretending teachers, ——who had set themselves up as an example for men to walk by, against whom he renews this caution:——For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies to the cross of Christ,—whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,—φρονεῦντες,—relish them, making them the only object of their wishes, taking aim at nothing better, and nothing higher,——but *our* conversation, says he in the text, is in heaven. We Christians, who have embraced a persecuted faith, are governed by other considerations,——have greater and nobler views; here we consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers.—Our home is in another country, where we are continually tending; there our hearts and

affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage ſhall be over, there ſhall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual reſt is deſigned and prepared for us for ever.—Our converſation is in heaven, from whence, ſays he, we alſo look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto him.—It is obſervable, that St. Peter repreſents the ſtate of Chriſtians under the ſame image, of ſtrangers on earth, whoſe city and proper home is heaven:—he makes uſe of that relation of citizens of heaven, as a ſtrong argument for a pure and holy life,—beſeeching them *as* pilgrims and ſtrangers *here*, as men whoſe intereſts and connexions are of ſo ſhort a date, and ſo trifling a nature, ——to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul, that is, unfit it for its heavenly country, and give it a diſreliſh to the enjoyment of that pure and ſpiritualized happineſs, of which that religion muſt conſiſt, wherein there ſhall in

no wiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination. —The Apoſtle tells us, that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God;—by which no doubt he means, that a virtuous life is the only medium of happineſs and terms of ſalvation, which can only give us admiſſion into heaven.——But ſome of our divines carry the aſſertion further, that without holineſs,—without ſome previous ſimilitude wrought in the faculties of the mind, correſponding with the nature of the pureſt of beings, who is to be the object of our fruition hereafter;——that it is not morally only, but phyſically impoſſible for it to be happy,——and that an impure and polluted ſoul is not only unworthy of ſo pure a preſence as the ſpirit of GOD, but even incapable of enjoying it, could it be admitted.

And here, not to feign a long hypotheſis, as ſome have done, of a ſinner's being admitted into heaven, with a particular deſcription of his condition and behaviour there,—we need only conſider, that the ſupreme good, like any other good, is of a relative nature, and conſe-

quently the enjoyment of it muſt require ſome qualification in the faculty, as well as the enjoyment of any other good does;—there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper, which will render that good a good to that individual,——otherwiſe though (it is true) it may be poſſeſſed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.—

Preach to a voluptuous epicure, who knows of no other happineſs in this world but what ariſes from good eating and drinking;—ſuch a one, in the Apoſtle's language, whoſe God was his belly;—preach to him of the abſtractions of the ſoul, tell of its flights, and briſker motion in the pure regions of immenſity;—repreſent to him that ſaints and angels eat not,—but that the ſpirit of a man lives for ever upon wiſdom and holineſs, and heavenly contemplations:—why, the only effect would be, that the fat glutton would ſtare awhile upon the preacher, and in a few minutes fall faſt aſleep.—No; if you would catch his attention, and make him take in your diſcourſe greedily,—you muſt preach to him out of the Alcoran,—talk

of the raptures of ſenſual enjoyments, and of the pleaſures of the perpetual feaſting, which Mahomet has deſcribed;—there you touch upon a note which awakens and ſinks into the inmoſt receſſes of his ſoul;—without which, diſcourſe as wiſely and abſtractedly as you will of heaven, your repreſentations of it, however glorious and exalted, will paſs like the ſongs of melody over an ear incapable of diſcerning the diſtinction of ſounds.

We ſee, even in the common intercourſes of ſociety,—how tedious it is to be in the company of a perſon whoſe humour is diſagreeable to our own, though perhaps in all other reſpects of the greateſt worth and excellency.—How then can we imagine that an ill-diſpoſed ſoul, whoſe converſation never reached to heaven, but whoſe appetites and deſires, to the laſt hour, have grovell'd upon this unclean ſpot of earth;——how can we imagine it ſhould hereafter take pleaſure in GOD, or be able to taſte joy or ſatisfaction from his preſence, who is ſo infinitely pure that he even putteth no truſt in his ſaints,——nor are the heavens themſelves (as Job

ſays) clean in his ſight?—The conſideration of this has led ſome writers ſo far, as to ſay, with ſome degree of irreverence in the expreſſion,——that it was not in the power of GOD to make a wicked man happy, if the ſoul was ſeparated from the body, with all its vicious habits and inclinations unreformed;—which thought a very able divine in our church has purſued ſo far, as to declare his belief,——that could the happieſt manſion in heaven be ſuppoſed to be allotted to a groſs and polluted ſpirit, it would be ſo far from being happy in it, that it would do penance there to all eternity:——by which he meant, it would carry ſuch appetites along with it, for which there could be found no ſuitable objects.—A ſufficient cauſe for conſtant torment;—for thoſe that it found there, would be ſo diſproportioned, that they would rather vex and upbraid it, than ſatisfy its wants.—This, it is true, is mere ſpeculation,—and what concerns us not to know;—it being enough for our purpoſe, that ſuch an experiment is never likely to be tried,—that we ſtand upon different terms with GOD,——that

a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happineſs,—that as GOD has no pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall any evil dwell with him;—and that, if we expect our happineſs to be in heaven, we muſt have our converſation in heaven, whilſt upon earth, make it the frequent ſubject of our thoughts and meditations, let every ſtep we take tend that way,—every action of our lives be conducted by that great mark of the prize of our high calling, forgetting thoſe things which are behind;—— forgetting this world,—diſengaging our thoughts and affections from it, and thereby transforming them to the likeneſs of what we hope to be hereafter.—How can we expect the inheritance of the ſaints of light, upon other terms than what they themſelves obtained it?——

Can that body expect to riſe and ſhine in glory, that is a ſlave to luſt, or dies in the fiery purſuit of an impure deſire? Can that heart ever become the lightſome ſeat of peace and joy, that burns hot as an oven with anger, rage, envy, luſt, and ſtrife? full of wicked imaginations, ſet only to deviſe and entertain evil?

Can that flesh appear in the last day and inherit the kingdom of Heaven in the glorified strength of perpetual youth, that is now clearly consumed in intemperance, sinks in the surfeit of continual drunkenness and gluttony, and then tumbles into the grave, and almost pollutes the ground that is under it?—Can we reasonably suppose that head shall ever wear or become the crown of righteousness and peace, in which dwells nothing but craft and avarice, deceit and fraud and treachery,——which is always plodding upon worldly designs, racked with ambition,—rent asunder with discord,—ever delighting in mischief to others, and unjust advantages to itself?—Shall that tongue, which is the glory of a man when rightly directed,—be ever set to God's heavenly praises, and warble forth the harmonies of the blessed, that is now full of cursing and bitterness, back-biting and slander, under which is ungodliness and vanity and the poison of asps?

Can it enter into our hearts even to hope, that those hands can ever receive

the reward of righteouſneſs, that are full of blood, laden with the wages of iniquity, of theft, rapine, violence, extortion, or other unlawful gain? or that thoſe feet ſhall ever be beautiful upon the mountains of light and joy, that were never ſhod for the preparation of the goſpel,—that have run quite out of the way of GOD's word,——and made haſte only to do evil?—No ſurely.—In this ſenſe,—he that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.

How inconſiſtent the whole body of ſin is, with the glories of the celeſtial body that ſhall be revealed hereafter,—— and that in proportion as we fix the repreſentation of theſe glories upon our minds, and in the more numerous particulars we do it,—the ſtronger the neceſſity as well as perſuaſion to deny ourſelves all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, as the only way to entitle us to that bleſſedneſs ſpoken of in the Revelations—of thoſe who do his

commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and ſhall enter into the gates of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels——to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, that are written in heaven, and to GOD the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect,—who have waſhed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

May GOD give us grace to live under the perpetual influence of this expectation,——that by the habitual impreſſion of theſe glories upon our imaginations, and the frequent ſending forth our thoughts and employing them on the other world——we may diſentangle them from this,——and by ſo having our converſation in heaven whilſt we are here, we may be thought fit inhabitants for it hereafter—that when GOD at the laſt day ſhall come with thouſands and ten thouſands of his ſaints to judge the world, we may enter with them into

happineſs, and with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we may praiſe and magnify his glorious name, and enjoy his preſence for ever.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

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